YVONNICK DENOËL

VATICAN SPIES

From the SECOND WORLD WAR *to* POPE FRANCIS

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Translated from the French by

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INTRODUCTION

THE SPIES WHO DIDN’T EXIST

Any rare visitors allowed up to the third floor of the Apostolic Palace discover the Secretariat of State, the throbbing nerve centre of the Vatican administration. At the beginning of the reign of John Paul II, a hundred or so employees worked there, split between two main sections: on one side, the pontifical foreign affairs service’s central office, also called the extraordinary affairs section; on the other, the general affairs section dealing with all aspects of the Church’s internal life. The whole occupies some twenty or so packed offices, cluttered with paperwork, looking out over the Court of San Damaso. Cardinal Villot runs the Secretariat, where he spends sometimes part or all of the night. The new Pope, John Paul II, kept him in his post. For those in the know, the Cardinal’s office has a bathroom next door, decorated with “delicately licentious” works by the artist Raphael.

One morning, in 1978, a couple of men came along to “make an estimate for repairing the electrical installations”. The *minutanti* (office supervisors) only half believed them because there wasn’t any real reason for them to be accompanied by Camillo Cibin, but as their job required discretion, they made no comment. Cibin was the boss of the Ufficio Centrale di Vigilanza, the Vatican’s internal security service. He was a big man with greying temples, not the sort to banter or waste time. He was in permanent contact with all his men, as well as with the Carabinieri and other Italian security services. He could, if need be, quickly mobilise

hundreds of policemen and seal off Saint Peter's Square. Unofficially, he was in constant touch with the CIA's Rome station.

The visitors who were there to make an assessment spent a week going from one office to another examining every small nook and cranny. They also visited the offices of the Governorate, the administration which runs the Vatican City. It was really a huge amount of work for a simple estimate. As is often the case, rumours started in the Curia and the conviction began to form that the two men were from to the Italian secret services. At Cibin's request, they had come to inspect for the possible presence of electronic surveillance.

On the last day, they shut themselves away with Cibin and Cardinal Villot in the latter's office. Presenting their findings, they removed a few tiny objects from their bag and placed them on the table while remaining silent. Cibin explained calmly that they were eleven microphones. Obviously, he had already been informed.

"These are Russian models," the senior of the two men explained. "The models are different, no doubt put in place over several periods of time, perhaps by different Eastern bloc services."

"And the others?"

"Ah, the others. Hm, Your Eminence, the others are American!"

Villot remained seated, pale and silent. He listened vaguely to all the technical explanations lavished on him by Cibin. He'd have to speak to the Pope, urgently.

The fantasy machine

The Vatican is a formidable machine for creating fantasies, even for the powerful of this world. This is perhaps because of its very ancient history, its taste for secrecy, the exceptional concentration of powers in the hands of the Supreme Pontiff, and also because of its very particular, unique status. It combines the temporal with the spiritual—running a micro-state and running one of the world's largest religious communities, numbering some 1.3 billion faithful. Rightly or wrongly, the popes are often credited with an exceptional influence on the way the world is managed. Quite a few intelligence service bosses take the Vatican seriously for one of the "great powers" in the intelligence community, either fearing it or praising it. "A

great power can send 10, 20 or even 50 spies into a given country, whereas the Church has hundreds of priests, at least, in the smallest of states," commented a former American intelligence operative, in admiration.

"Twice a year, each priest describes the situation of his parish, the important people, and the state of the finances, the political climate, and the social situation. Each deacon reports to his bishop, who reports to the apostolic nuncio, who sends his reports to the Secretariat of State in Rome …" So said a former Eastern bloc spy, the Polish Colonel Tomasz Turowski, who commented enviously on the country he had been given the job of spying on in the 1970s.[1] He was not entirely wrong: every nuncio had access to privileged intelligence sources, which would make quite a few secret services green with envy.

The bishops and the local clergy obviously have a good idea of what is going on in their country. The missionary priests and sisters have also to be taken into account, deployed as they are throughout the world, even in regions where Catholics are in a minority. Finally, the nuncio is also in theory a source of valuable intelligence about the local clergy. If the faithful complain about a priest, they do so in principle to the nuncio.

This idea of an omnipresent, if not all-powerful, intelligence service was the most popular belief of the 20th century, shared as much by Hitler as by Mussolini, Stalin and Roosevelt and, more recently, Reagan and Andropov. The heads of these states all devoted considerable means to spying on the microscopic Vatican. This idea of theirs was a caricature, and we will have many opportunities to confirm this: most of the priests, of course, were not spies. They'd never been trained for it. In principle, deceit has no place in pastoral traditions. Priests worked in places of worship known to everybody, wearing clothes one could hardly call discreet. If they became privy to secrets during confession, in theory they were forbidden to repeat them. On the other hand, it seems difficult to believe that the Vatican was never involved with intelligence.

And this is basically the official version given by the Holy See: the Vatican has no secret service. Institutionally, this is correct. There are Swiss Guards and a police force, both with the job of protecting the Pope and dealing with internal security, but that is all. Actually, nobody we spoke to from whatever country has been able to draw up an organogram of the

Vatican's intelligence service. Their knowledge was limited to that of a prelate in charge of relations with such and such a service.

In the 20th century, however, it became difficult to deny that the Holy See had been enlisted willy-nilly in the "Big Game", as the secret conflict between the world's great powers was called. The Vatican was the target of many operations, first during World War II, then during the Cold War. It threw itself very clearly into the struggle against communism, accepting in the process that it had to collaborate with organisations and people that had very little to do with Catholic values. It had to fight against the infiltration of foreign agents, and their destabilising or harmful manoeuvres; and it also had to exchange information and collaborate with various secret services, carry out unofficial negotiations outside normal diplomatic channels, finance and resupply clandestine movements, and gather and transmit intelligence in hostile environments. It had to supervise and deal with common law criminal affairs, political assassinations, matters of corruption. Finally, as the Church is not a monolithic institution but contains some very varied organisations and spheres of influence within it, some real internal conflicts had to be faced.

All these aspects had an impact on the Pontifical State's security and formed the security aspect of the Church's organisation. This aspect exists in every state and somebody has to deal with it.

Where do the "Vatican spies" come from?

The history of security in the Catholic Church goes back a long way, at least to the 16th century. According to several writers,[2] Antonio Ghislieri—Pope Pius V (1566–72)—was the great founder of espionage in the Vatican. To counter the heretical Queen of England, Elizabeth I, and assist the pretensions of the Catholic Mary Stuart, Pius IV entrusted Ghislieri, at the time a young priest, with the task of gathering intelligence on all those whom the Inquisition might be called upon to investigate. His agents showed considerable efficiency, with some 1 200 files of charges collected in the first year, resulting in 200 convictions. In 1551 Ghislieri was promoted to the rank of general in the Inquisition. He set up a large network of spies who spread their net over Rome, infiltrating the nobles' household staffs, the taverns and even the brothels. In this way, he developed a vast

filing system on the Roman population, earning him the nickname of the “Shadow Pope”. He ran a sort of secret police capable of kidnapping anybody suspected of heresy in the middle of the street and torturing him at will. Ghislieri was appointed a cardinal by Paul IV, but when the latter died in 1559, the Roman population revolted and hunted down the spies.

The crowd took the Palace of the Inquisition by storm. Ghislieri just managed to flee along with his secret archives. Seven years later, he got his revenge by becoming pope. It was the moment for mobilising everyone against the Protestant Reformation and his profile seemed to be very much suited to the task. Having become Pius V, he set up a spy service which he called the “Holy Alliance”, whose main job was to counter the intrigues of the “schismatic” court in London.

Depending on the period, the reality of spying, both for and against the Vatican, has varied greatly. Several modern-day authors continue to use the term “Holy Alliance”, which is now anachronistic. The 19th century is the period which we know best, thanks to the work of the American academic David Alvarez.[3] He was able to work with the Jesuit Robert Graham, a counter-espionage specialist, who has published several research articles on historical affairs. When confronted with the excitement of national revolutions in the 19th century, the Papacy needed a solid intelligence service so as to neutralise any threats and plots; its services infiltrated moles into the revolutionary or nationalist movements. They worked closely with the services of other conservative regimes, like the Kingdom of Naples or Austria. They also kept an eye on dissidents within the Church.

In 1870, the revolution that Garibaldi launched robbed the Pope of the Pontifical States. This loss dealt a hard blow to the Pope’s intelligence capabilities, if only because of the weakness of the nunciature network. The Vatican’s police service was reduced to a handful of officers in uniform. The Kingdom of Italy had a network of informers to keep the Vatican under surveillance, at all levels (household servants, officials, etc.), their job being to watch over the Pope’s health and to make sure he didn’t flee. In the first third of the 20th century, the Italians were the only ones to set up a form of spying on the Vatican.

Under the pontificate of Pius X (1903–14), a new network of political spying was created, the Sapinière[4] (the French name for the Sodalitium Pianum, the Society of Saint Pius V). Its boss, Umberto Benigni, a

provincial journalist and a traditionalist priest, was appointed under-secretary at the Secretariat of State in 1906, dealing with extraordinary (i.e. foreign) ecclesiastical affairs. He was given the task of flushing out agents of modernism within the Church, and preserving the traditional order. He recruited agents from every continent: intercepting mail, tailing suspects, transcribing sermons and conferences—any and every expedient was used. In agreement with the Italian postal service, all mail belonging to priests and bishops suspected of political or theological liberalism was monitored. Professors in Catholic universities lost their jobs; priests were ordered to comply, were transferred to distant parishes, or even suspended; authors were put on the blacklist. The campaign even went so far as to excommunicate the most rebellious. Benigni wove his web everywhere, daring even to infiltrate the Roman Curia and the Pope's apartments.

In 1911, the liberal press started denouncing Benigni, who quit his post but carried on with his activities behind the scenes. His movement was only disbanded in 1921. At the Secretariat of State, his place was taken by a certain Mgr Eugenio Pacelli. A few authors continued to use the term "Sapinière" to denote the network of Vatican spies in the 20th century, though it was unusual.

During World War I, the private chamberlain and confidant of Pope Benedict XV turned out to be an agent of the German secret services: this was the Bavarian priest Rudolf Gerlach. During the period when Italy remained neutral, he transferred large sums of money in support of German propaganda in the more unprincipled papers. He used the pontifical diplomatic bag to correspond with the German services. The threat of a scandal led to the affair being hushed up: Gerlach was taken to the Swiss border and put over it. He was sentenced *in absentia* to life imprisonment.[5] This initial success of the German intelligence service was not forgotten in World War II, both on the Allied side, where Pius XII was thought to be too moderate towards Hitler, and on the side of the Germans, who made a huge effort to win him over, then threaten him.

When World War I ended, the Vatican was still a negligible power as far as intelligence was concerned. It was only after 1929 that its intelligence capacity started gathering steam. The Lateran Pacts, made with the Mussolini regime, gave a temporal presence to the Holy See: it was territorial and also financial. We will see that the Concordat wasn't a gift that Mussolini made to the Pope but rather an agreement marked by well-

defined interests. It was not by chance that the Vatican only began carrying out a political assault on Communist Russia after 1929–30 by means of a series of clandestine activities. During the 1917–29 period the patience and caution shown by the Vatican towards the USSR had not resulted in the lifting of restrictions on religious liberties, and the persecution of the Catholic clergy in that country went on unchecked. The confrontation naturally took place when room for manoeuvre reappeared. The 1930s are therefore the departure point of our story, which was at first the story of a fight lasting three-quarters of a century between the Catholic International and the Communist International. Admittedly, in the early years of the 1940s, the struggle against Nazism took precedence, even more so when Rome was occupied by the German army after Mussolini's fall. But on the larger scale of our history, this was but a tragic pause, which did not distract the Vatican's attention from its main aim: its struggle against communism.

In many respects, this is the story of an unequal struggle between a despotic empire with its grossly enlarged secret services and a small state not yet well versed in secret activities. But this little state showed it could take knocks surprisingly well and, in John Paul II, it found a leader capable of reversing the situation and contributing to victory, though this was obtained at the price of great compromises, which left a thorny legacy.

The Vatican—how it works

If the role and importance of intelligence work varied from one pope to another and if there was no permanent unified intelligence service within the Vatican, how can we identify those who, occasionally or not, deal with intelligence? It is important to understand the pope's role and the Curia's organisation above all else.

The term "Curia" comes from ancient Rome, where it denoted the seat of the Senate. The popes in the Middle Ages maintained a court of a few hundred clerics and several dozen prelates, who were called in turn the Curia. The name remains, as a way of identifying the Vatican government and its administration. To be precise, it is the Holy See that governs the Catholic Church for the pope, not the Vatican—the place accommodating the Holy See. But it is now habitual to use the two terms interchangeably.

The pope is the Bishop of Rome. He delegates direct responsibility for his diocese to a curate. He is the supreme governor and legislator of the

Church. He defines policy, theological doctrine and the liturgy, appoints the bishops, decides how charitable resources are to be used, and runs the finances, personnel, religious instruction and so forth. Outside, he is the Church's spokesman, the head of Vatican diplomacy, and the figure who speaks to other religions. A pope is a politician, a diplomat, a theologian, a manager, a media star and a moral authority all at the same time. No pope can claim to excel in all these roles. Circumstances dictate what the profile of each is like. It so happened that in the 20th century several popes wanted or were compelled to get involved in intelligence and clandestine work. The Curia is the bureaucratic instrument through which the Holy See is administered. The Jesuits have their own curia to administer their order. The modern Curia consists of a Secretariat of State, nine congregations, three tribunals and various other specialised offices. The term "dicastery" is sometimes used to describe a type of department or congregation.

The Vatican's real nerve centre is the Secretariat of State (consisting of about 120 people). It constitutes the central power: it has authority over all the others. The Secretary of State sees the pope at least once a day and submits all urgent business to him. His role is that of a filter, but also that of a transmitter. As we have seen, the first section is run by a so-called substitute, and manages the internal business of the Church. It is organised in terms of offices defined by language. The second section deals with relations with other states. It is organised in offices defined by region. The lights remain on until late at night, especially for those working directly with the pope. The offices, built after World War II above the south-west wing of the Renaissance edifice which houses the pope's residence, are rather Spartan. The personnel run the pope's secretariat, help him prepare his public addresses, translate them, and undertake all the commissions he gives them. Ever since Pius XII, the Secretariat has become a super-agency which supervises all the dicasteries.

The Curia is a system in which everything fits together and in which some officials belong to several sections at the same time and sit jointly on several committees. In the 1980s, 450 people lived permanently in the Vatican, slightly less than 300 of whom were citizens of the Holy See. Some 4 000 people in all work within the city: administration officials, librarians, artisans, gardeners, drivers and so on. The congregations are committees of cardinals to which have been added, ever since the Second Vatican Council, several co-opted bishops, who all meet once a week to

consider current business. The priests working in the Curia have usually received an advanced education and often speak several languages. But they move from one post to another, less because of their expertise in some speciality or other, than because of their loyalty, their ecclesiastical pedigree or their accountability to their superior. It is not surprising to see priests, who have not been prepared for these new functions, being appointed to managerial functions. Nor is it surprising for priests without any experience of intelligence work to launch into risky operations. This lack of experience (though it's less true nowadays) is a source of strength, as well as of weakness.

Although Paul VI, followed by John Paul II, started to make the Curia more international, Italians still form the majority. They occupy several key posts full-time. Italian remains the main language of work. A shared faith and devotion do not discourage a certain predilection for gossip or even intrigue: everybody loves exchanging malicious gossip about what is going on in the palace, the relations of the pope with his entourage, guessing who is going to be appointed to such and such a post, and so on. But the "real" secrets, notably the financial ones, are well guarded. And the immediate entourage of the pope takes care (as a rule) to avoid talking carelessly about them.

In order of importance, the main congregation is that of the Doctrine of the Faith (which until 1908 was called the Holy Inquisition), which still has as its objective the flushing out of heretics, and has therefore exercised the functions of an internal intelligence agency in certain periods. On the other hand, its power of coercion has been greatly diminished in the 20th century compared with the past: it can "simply" reprimand people, reduce them to silence, or, according to often unfathomable procedures, excommunicate them. Important theologians like Teilhard de Chardin or Hans Küng suffered at its hands. All documents produced by the Curia that have doctrinal implications must be approved by this congregation before being circulated.

During the Cold War, the Congregation for the Eastern Church (i.e. of the Eastern bloc) occupied a special place. Bishops were appointed and supervised by the Congregation for the Bishops. Missionary orders were run by the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples. The Congregation for the Clergy was in charge of training and clerical discipline.

The Second Vatican Council added new entities to the existing departments, which are often called the “New Curia”, though they are frequently disapproved of by the older ones since they cost more and are more modern in the way they function. The use that the pontiff makes of the Curia changes with each new pope. As a champion of strong authority, the Curia has sought to highlight its own authority. It has attracted a lot of resentment from the bishops and the cardinals; this was expressed on the occasion of Vatican II, which gave them greater freedom of speech. They criticised it confusedly for being slow, offhand, and ignorant of local situations.

Ever since the 16th century, the nuncios (ambassadors) have represented the Vatican to state governments and local churches. Most of the nuncios have graduated from the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, a top-notch school set up at the beginning of the 18th century. In the absence of a nuncio, an apostolic delegate is sent. Finally, certain congregations play a political or diplomatic role on occasions. The nuncios represent the pope in foreign countries and to local clergies. They are sometimes seen by local hierarchies of the Church as the pope’s spies, with the job of spying on them and intriguing behind their backs. In 1945, the Holy See had established diplomatic relations with 41 countries in its own right, and was represented by apostolic delegates in a further 20 countries. In 2018, it had 183 diplomatic representations.

Spying, how many divisions?

In this overall picture, who was in charge of intelligence? We can exclude the Swiss Guards, whose only mission is to protect the pope. The Vigilanza shares this task with them but has wider functions. It dates back to the 19th century when the pontifical police force was created. It numbers some 120 officers with very diverse tasks: patrolling within the Vatican City and checking the papers of visitors, ensuring close contact with the Italian police, investigating thefts, burglaries and other offences. A brigade in civilian dress was set up in the 1970s, as a result of increasing attacks and physical threats against the pope. The Vigilanza can arrest suspects on Vatican soil and present them to the judicial authorities. The Holy See can itself judge those who commit offences inside the Vatican. It can also ask Italy to do so in its stead. In practice, we will see that the institution carries

out more unofficial tasks. It occasionally taps telephones and investigates suspicious people; this unit is accountable directly to the Secretary of State, which makes him, on paper at least, the head of intelligence.

In theory, the Secretary of State deals with the diplomatic intelligence sent in by the nunciatures and the Vigilanza's investigations, as well as that of the network of unofficial emissaries who work under his responsibility. This constitutes a first circle under his direct control. Next, there is a much wider second circle, in which individuals move about, attached to an order (Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, and so on) or to more recent lay movements (such as Opus Dei, the Legionaries of Christ, Communion and Liberation, Sant'Egidio), or to charitable NGOs, associations, Catholic think tanks and other bodies.

Even if they are very different from each other, they all want to help the Church, putting their networks at its disposal for direct action which the Vatican could claim to know nothing about. Their activities may be coordinated by the institution they belong to or by one of the Curia's prelates, but it is very rare that the Secretariat deals with them directly, since they are not supposed to be acting at the request of the Holy See. Sometimes these little groups or networks take their own initiatives, which may surprise even the Vatican. They may be called to order; it also happens that they are left to their own devices, at their own risk and peril. The only dicastery not reporting directly to the Secretariat and that has a real intelligence capability is the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, whose main task is to fight against doctrinal "deviances"; it therefore carries out investigations all round the world. The Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples, to a lesser degree, also passes on intelligence coming from the missions.

It is also the case that the pope supervises certain files and missions directly, most often through the intervention of his personal secretary: the latter's importance has not been identified well enough until now, even if it obviously varies from one pope to another. The personal secretary is located closest to the pope, sees all the files that cross his desk, and takes part in many audiences. But he can also, without being noticed, disappear for a few days on discreet missions. As the public doesn't know him, there's no risk of his being spotted.

The thesis of this book is that the pope is really the person who defines, consciously or not, the position that intelligence and secret activity have

during his pontificate. This is why it can vary considerably within the space of a few years. But the main characters do not disappear: they are happy to take up their management or pastoral duties again, while waiting to be reactivated. Some even carry on with their behind-the-scenes activities, convinced they are working for the dignity of the Church. The struggle against communism, in particular between the 1930s and the 1980s, has been the imperative which has prevailed over all other considerations; it justified flouting many ethical precepts and committing many excesses.

So during the more intense periods the “Vatican spies” aren’t to be counted in the tens of thousands but in the hundreds. With such numbers, can one play in the big league of intelligence powers and influence history? Can one take on the Communist secret service steamroller or keep one’s own independence when faced with the American giant? This is what this inquiry is about. It considers those who spy on the Vatican just as much as it looks at the priests who confront them or carry out secret activities.

The story that follows involves men of the Church and spies (sometimes they are one and the same), without any wish either to condemn them or to praise them. This is not really religious history. It has its roots in the political and geopolitical history of the 20th century, sometimes in Italian history. But it is also a very human history, surprisingly rich in betrayals, in sacrifices, in cold calculations, in dirty tricks, in compromises and sometimes in murders.

It tells only a small part of the story of the Church. It is not interested in pastoral life, theological debates or institutional history; as a result it leaves aside a large majority of the men of the Church and their activities. It has no other aim than to draw attention to a not very well-known aspect of contemporary history, which it is now time to face.

I

PACELLI

1

A CRISIS POPE

“The old mule is dead at last,” sighed Mussolini in front of his son-in-law, Count Ciano, when the death of Pope Pius XI was announced. In his *Political Diaries*, Ciano testifies to the indifference that the forthcoming conclave, which had the job of appointing Pope Ratti’s successor, evoked in Mussolini. “The Conclave doesn’t interest him in the slightest. If the new pope is Italian, all the better. If he’s a foreigner, even better.”[1]

Naturally Mussolini, like Hitler, who was getting ready for war in Europe, pretended to be indifferent, but in reality they followed what was going on in the Vatican very closely. The head of the Fascist state was in a good position to do just that. For a long time, the Italian secret services had been at the forefront in keeping an eye on the Vatican.[2] This was done by watching the Vatican mail, which used the Italian postal system. The Italian police had also tapped the telephone lines running along the Vatican walls and the private lines of prelates and high dignitaries living in Rome. While the Lateran Pacts were being negotiated in 1929, Mussolini was able to discover what the person he was in touch with was playing at and to know which proposals were acceptable to the Pope. This fairly effective surveillance was backed up by informers who were constantly recruited: lowly Vatican administration officials, scheming journalists and aristocrats, all wanting to supplement their incomes “on the side”.

Many informants were, however, not very reliable or very productive. Thus “Agent 96”, Monsignor Enrico Pucci, was a sort of an unofficial spokesman for the Holy See. He published a regular bulletin on the activities of the Vatican and worked freelance for several newspapers as an “expert” on Vatican affairs. He was to be seen hanging around the Secretariat of State offices, with the Swiss Guards, in the cafés, with very uncertain results. He had been recruited in 1927 by the Italian police, which he supplied with gossip on the Pope’s health, Secretariat of State rumours, and so on. He sent his most important reports directly to Mussolini’s office and, on top of that, made extra pocket money by selling his information to several foreign embassies. Protected no doubt by a Vatican “monsignor” (for in the Vatican everybody had to be some eminence or other’s agent), Pucci remained active after the war.

Another informant, a lay person this time, worked in the cipher service: Stanislas Caterini supplied the OVRA, the Fascist political police, with information on the Holy See’s secret codes. He was unmasked and dismissed in 1931.

Most of the Pope’s policemen were in fact recruited from the Italian police, and kept in close contact with their former colleagues, if only to organise the Pontiff’s protection when he travelled. As a result, it was easy to infiltrate this service. In 1939, command of the Papal Gendarmerie was entrusted to Nicolas Canoli, an OVRA agent. There he found a former comrade, Giovanni Fazio, director of the special section of the police force. This militant Fascist ran a small Italian plainclothes police unit, placed at the disposal of the Vatican. But he was not discreet, which, among spies, is a mortal sin. Unmasked, he was sacked in 1942.

During the war, the police were therefore in a situation to watch the activities of the diplomatic delegations embedded in the Vatican City, from the inside. Most of the diplomats lived in the same household. The Papal Gendarmerie allowed men from the OVRA to enter the diplomats’ deserted offices discreetly, led by corrupt servants. There they were able to open the safes and take photographs of documents and code books.

The man who coordinated Italian spying in the Vatican and who had the ear of Mussolini was Arturo Bocchini. He was appointed the head of the OVRA and of all the secret services in 1933. This made him one of the Fascist regime’s most powerful men. He was the Italian counterpart of Himmler, who followed his example when organising the Gestapo. But

nowadays his biographers give him credit for a certain dose of humanity, which made him mitigate some of the drastic measures imposed by the Germans.[3] He died at the end of 1940. Karl Wolff, Himmler's deputy assistant, and Reinhard Heydrich attended his funeral.

* * *

How far the Vatican was penetrated must, however, not be overestimated. The Secretariat of State was a horizontal organisation with few hierarchical levels. A taste for the covert was well developed, even among the various offices. Dispatches and reports arrived quickly in the hands of two assistant secretaries—Domenico Tardini (foreign affairs) and Giovanni Montini (general affairs). Both of them read everything and composed the answers, if necessary. Secretary of State Luigi Maglione dealt in person with the most sensitive files. When he died in August 1944, Pius XII chose not to replace him. The number of people handling the most sensitive documents was thereby very much reduced. In the other direction, the Vatican had a valuable source within the Fascist power structure. Francesco Babuscio Rizzo was "advisor to the Italian Embassy to the Holy See". He was one of Tardini's friends; he passed on documents reserved in principle for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to the Secretariat of State. The Vatican administration was careful not to say where the information came from so as not to betray its source. It is not known whether he acted as he did on his own initiative or his superior's. In any case, the leaks were made without the approval of the minister.

Apart from its own diplomatic network, the Secretariat also received information from diplomatic personnel present in the Vatican.

The Vatican did not have its own postal service. When Italy entered the war, the Pope accepted the offer made by the Swiss minister of foreign affairs to include the Vatican diplomatic correspondence in its own diplomatic bag. The Secretariat also used the British services a little later (for correspondence intended for the Empire) and that of the Americans (it is now known that the FBI took advantage of the situation to copy the messages). The Italians continued to open the post as soon as they had an opportunity. However, the Vatican's enciphered codes (reinforced in 1940) resisted better than others.

The Germans were not in such a good position to follow what was going on in the Vatican and receive information about the conclave of 1939. Taras Borodajkewycz, one of the informers of the Sicherheitsdienst—the security service of the SS and Nazi Party—was sent there to follow events but was unable to obtain any useful information. Less familiar with Roman folklore as they were, the Germans had trouble assessing the value of potential sources. In an approach to the German Embassy a crook proposed purchasing the election of a pro-German candidate for 3 million marks. Hitler refused.

On 1 March 1939, 62 cardinals met far from indiscreet ears for a conclave, which turned out to be the fastest in the first half of the 20th century: only three rounds of voting were needed. The Secretary of State and Camerlengo (or chamberlain, the prelate who governed during the interregnum), Eugenio Pacelli, was already among the favourites. As proof of his qualities as a diplomat, he aroused hardly any direct opposition among the big European powers. He was Italian and spoke German, had established concordats in Italy and Germany, and had always abstained from condemning the Fascist and Nazi regimes. This was what encouraged the Axis powers. He was a notorious anti-communist, very much appreciated by the previous pope, who did not hide the critical sentiments that dictatorships inspired in him from the French and the British. He was therefore backed by the Quai d'Orsay and the British Foreign Office. In short, everybody saw in him what they wanted to see. Within the Church, the way Pacelli positioned himself was just as unifying, all the more so as he promised to appoint Cardinal Maglione, his most serious rival, as his Secretary of State. To understand such a triumph, it is necessary to review an almost faultless career.

A brilliant, very well-protected subject

The ecclesiastical career of Eugenio Pacelli, who was born in 1876, started under the best auspices possible. The Pacelli family was identified with the "black nobility"—the Roman Catholic aristocracy with counter-revolutionary tendencies. His grandfather Marcantonio Pacelli was a lay lawyer for the Papacy, with a diploma in canonical law, who was appointed Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of the Interior at the instigation of Pius IX. In this post, he pursued Italian revolutionaries successfully, for

which he was ennobled. He was also one of the founders of the Vatican daily, *L'Osservatore Romano*.

A cousin of young Eugenio, Ernesto Pacelli, was the financial advisor of Pope Leo XIII. In 1880, with other members of the Catholic nobility, he founded the Banco di Roma, of which he was chairman until the beginning of the war. As the friend of several Italian ministers, Ernesto helped to reduce tension between the Vatican and the Italian government. He also persuaded the Pope to acquire a stake in several regional banks, in spite of the fact that he didn't like finance, to enable Catholics to have a place where they could invest their money safely. In 1913, dividends received from the Banco di Roma represented half the Vatican's income. This shadowy financier played a key role in helping the Church recover part of the wealth it had been despoiled of when it lost the Pontifical States and in negotiating the Lateran Pacts in 1929. However, his influence declined later. His three sons in turn played a discreet but increasingly important role in Vatican finances under the reign of their uncle Pope Pius XII.

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The young Eugenio had gone to high school, then to the seminary of Capranica College, an obligatory staging post for future Curia eminences. Contrary to custom, he was allowed to live with his family for reasons of health: a sign that his family had powerful friends within the Vatican. He was ordained at 24. In 1901, he entered a Roman congregation as a clerk, with solid recommendations, and very quickly joined the Secretariat of State, with the job of decoding ciphered telegrams. Barely 25, he was sent to London to meet the new king, Edward VII, and present the Pope's condolences on Queen Victoria's death. As early as 1903, he became the head (*minutante*) of an office, with the task of composing drafts of Secretariat of State dispatches. He was therefore "brought up" and trained in the heart of the Vatican machine, where the big decisions were made.

In 1906, he worked with Pietro Gasparri, in charge of diplomatic affairs, in particular on the thorny issue of the separation of Church and State in France. The Holy See had broken off diplomatic relations with France in 1904, but had kept a secret envoy in Paris, Mgr Carlo Montagnini, "for all that the Holy See might need". He was placed under surveillance by the French police and expelled as a reprisal following the publication of an

anti-republican pamphlet by a Parisian priest. His documents, seized by the police, were leaked to the Parisian newspapers at the instigation of the minister, Clemenceau, which triggered a pretty scandal.

Appointed Secretary in 1914, Eugenio took part in negotiating the concordat with Serbia—his diplomatic baptism of fire. The atmosphere during his professional ascendancy was fraught: at the time, the Vatican was characterised by radical anti-modernism; this was revealed by ecclesiastical personnel being spied on. The Pope had a fanatical prelate brought in to purge them. Umberto Benigni, who had been in charge of several Catholic newspapers, was officially Assistant Secretary of the Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, but he ran the clandestine organisation the Sodalitium Pianum—the Society of St Pius V: a spy network, considered necessary and supported by the Pope to pursue dissidents, open mail, encourage informants, and so on, in order to eradicate modern heresy in the Church.

Among his targets was the young Mgr Giovanni Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, who remained decidedly wary of the Vatican's spy networks. If Pacelli went through this new form of inquisition without any problems, it was because he was considered reliable and hardly likely to be suspected of liberalism.[4] Some observers went so far as to wonder if the young Pacelli wasn't from the Sodalitium Pianum. The records are missing that would settle matters, but letters from the head of the network in Belgium[5] might lead one to believe so. In any case, such a theory would explain the appetite Pope Pius XII later showed for intrigue and secret activities. After Pope Pius X's death in 1914, the atmosphere changed with the new pope, Benedict XV, who appointed Cardinal Gasparri, Pacelli's mentor, as Secretary of State. Benigni continued his activities on a private basis before placing himself at the disposal of the OVRA: for all that, he doesn't seem to have done any damage during the war, since the Curia kept him at a distance. And Pacelli became the fiendish Mgr Benigni's replacement. He negotiated the turn in the road, and subtly moved away from the ultra-conservatives, whom the new pope liked less.

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As confirmation of his career in the Secretariat, Pacelli was appointed nuncio to Bavaria in the spring of 1917, residing in Munich.[6] Slim, pale, with the majestic deportment of a Renaissance prince, he made a very good impression in German society. A gossip columnist mentioned by Marie Levant described him thus: “with his aesthetic bearing, his traits evoked those of the sculpted profile on an ancient cameo and only rarely did a shadow of a smile animate this face”.

After the Spartacist uprising, it was decided to open a nunciature in Berlin in 1920, but Pacelli remained in Munich, straddling the two nunciatures until 1925. During this time he completed the negotiations for a concordat with Bavaria. The Holy See was the first foreign power with which the recently established Weimar Republic set up diplomatic relations. For this reason, despite his youth, Pacelli became the nuncio for the diplomatic corps. His big mission, after the dress rehearsal that the concordat with Bavaria represented, was to negotiate a new status for the Catholic Church in Germany in the complex post-war context.

The Vatican judged severely the fate that the victors in 1918 had reserved for Germany. Vatican diplomacy, led by Gasparri, sought to reduce the amount of reparations imposed on the defeated country (20 billion gold marks). This policy made the Vatican’s representative in Berlin one of Germany’s friends, especially as the Holy See supported the territorial integrity of the Reich. In exchange for its support, the Vatican hoped that definite advances would be made on the status and well-being of Church institutions. Pacelli was keen to settle the Bavarian negotiations above all else. It must be said that Bavarian Catholicism was more traditional and, for the most part, more fundamentalist than that of the rest of the country.

In 1922 Benedict XV passed away and the erudite Cardinal Ratti succeeded him, under the name of Pius XI, keeping Gasparri in his post. In 1923, Franco-Belgian troops occupied the Rhineland as a reprisal for the non-payment of war reparations. They supported separatist movements there. In Munich, in 1924, Pacelli obtained an agreement which was very favourable to the Church (freedom to appoint bishops, generous state funding for the Catholic Church, compulsory religious instruction in school, and so forth). He then went and settled in Berlin for four years and achieved a concordat with Germany, which earned him a cardinal’s hat in 1939. These Munich years were therefore very important in the future pope’s career. It was also at this time that this man of a suspicious nature met those

who were to make up his inner circle and were allowed to deal with the most sensitive files.

The inner circle

In Munich, Pacelli met a man who was to become his secretary and play a key role during his pontificate. A small, asthmatic Bavarian, Jesuit Father Robert Leiber was first of all Nuncio Pacelli's German teacher before becoming one of his closest advisors. His remit was and remained very sketchy: he did not appear in the official organisational chart but read everything that crossed his master's desk and saw him several times a day. He confided in nobody. Félix Morlión, a priest and intelligence agent in American service, described Father Leiber during the war as the man used for secret tasks whose failures could be denied if necessary, since he had no official status in the Vatican. It was no doubt through Leiber that Pacelli learned to get to know and appreciate the Superior General of the Jesuits, Wladimir Ledóchowski, and to make him his ally. The scion of a Polish aristocratic family banished by the Tsar in the 19th century, Wladimir was the nephew of a cardinal who had become a prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. He had himself been elected Superior General of the Jesuits in 1915. One of the Jesuits, on a mission to Russia, described him thus: "He was a small, frail man with a thin, aesthetic face, hollow cheeks, a bare forehead and the most limpid eyes I had ever seen. He had a very decided and almost brusque manner of speaking, while still being very friendly and an excellent person to speak to."[7]

It was he who was given the task of setting up the Pontifical Oriental Institute and the Russian College, the Russicum. Here Russian was spoken and the men dressed as Russian Orthodox priests. Future missionary priests were trained there to spread the Catholic faith between the Baltic and the Black Sea, at the risk of their own lives. In a letter to all the Jesuits, Ledóchowski, a fiercely anti-communist conservative, issued the signal for a merciless struggle against modern atheism.

Among his agents it is worth mentioning Karl Stark, a German living in Zurich, who ran a network operating in Germany and France; and Father Joseph Ledit, a Frenchman who had already been to Russia and spread his web in the Eastern bloc countries, with a network head in each country. In

France, the Jesuit Father Joseph Robine answered Ledóchowski's call by creating the Unitas Office in September 1934. When Pacelli became Secretary of State, he already knew that the Jesuits were one of the forces he could count on.

* * *

It was also during the period of his nunciature that Pacelli started an unlikely friendship with a young German nun, Sister Pascalina Lehnert, eighteen years his junior. He got to know her during a stay in a rest home for clerics, Stella Maris, in Rorschach, in the Swiss Alps, where she worked. It was indeed unusual that Pacelli should take her into his service, given the ecclesiastical rules. The code of canonical law defined by Benedict XV enjoined all clerics to avoid living with women whose presence risked causing suspicion and to choose instead a relative or an elderly woman of a "virtuous nature". Sister Pascalina was very much talked about within the Church and even more so outside it. Their relationship, however, was never improper, it seems: if it had been, Pacelli's enemies and the foreign secret services would not have missed the opportunity to make the most of it. On the other hand, her rough and ready manner and her supposed sway over "her" important man made people imagine all sorts of things—she was given the highly exaggerated nickname "Popessa"[8] at the end of her life. Though her testimony always has to be confirmed by other sources, it does shed new light on the Pope's intimate life.

It is thanks to her that we know something about the tragic events in 1919 which helped shape Pacelli's character: in February, communist crowds took Munich by storm, and proclaimed the new Soviet Republic of Bavaria. Nearly all the diplomats fled. The nunciature's personnel were evacuated. Only Pacelli, Pascalina and Robert Leiber remained behind. In April 1919, the Bolsheviks took the nuncio's building by storm. The windows were shattered by gunfire. As the attackers broke down the heavy entrance door, Pacelli confronted them from the top of the stairs with Sister Pascalina beside him. Despite the abuse shouted at them, they stood up to the crowd, which was looking for money and food, which the prelate was suspected of hiding. The communist authorities wanted the nuncio to leave the town. A few days later, uniformed, armed Red Guards, followed by an

enraged crowd, burst once again into the nunciature. What did they want? They had come to take his car. The nuncio had the garage opened, but the car wouldn't start. A number of authors attribute the origin of Pacelli's fierce anti-communism to these events. Whatever the case, they evidently reinforced his reputation in Rome. The Soviet Republic of Bavaria didn't last long. On 3 May, it was overthrown by the Freikorps and a provisional government was set up, run by General Ludendorff, who had commanded the German forces during the war.

Another anecdote was provided by Sister Pascalina,[9] this time unverifiable. Munich was the town where Adolf Hitler started his ascent to power, building up his movement using the favourable situation caused by the economic crisis. One evening, young Adolf Hitler, still relatively unknown, turned up at Archbishop Pacelli's residence, holding a letter of recommendation from Ludendorff, who praised his bravery when he'd been a corporal serving under the general's orders. Hitler introduced himself as a crusader against communism. Spell-bound, it seems Pacelli gave him (according to Sister Pascalina) a sum of money to help him with his struggle. Such a meeting, if indeed it took place, does not necessarily mean that Pacelli would have become pro-Nazi.

* * *

A third person was soon to join the strange duo formed by Leiber and Sister Pascalina. In 1911 Francis Spellman, a young American, turned up in Rome; he'd just graduated from Fordham University in New York. He wanted to take Holy Orders but, unlike his colleagues, he had chosen the prestigious American College in Rome, situated in the charming quarter of the Via dell'Umiltà. His brethren understood very quickly that he was one of the most ambitious men in the seminary: he got himself noticed (and criticised) for his tendency to approach and flatter all the monsignori he came across. The young man showed that he was keen to understand the wheels of power within the Vatican: the cliques, the oppositions and the invisible friendships were soon no longer a secret for him.[10]

As soon as he was ordained, in 1916, Spellman was sent to Boston, a diocese run by the powerful Cardinal O'Connell, who didn't accept anybody putting themselves forward. He took an immediate dislike to Spellman and subjected him to a multitude of humiliations over nine years.

Spellman swallowed all the humiliations, accepted all the chores dished out to him, and in the end managed to get himself recalled to Rome to join the team in the Secretariat of State. He was to devote all his energy to developing his networks. He first took on the job of a minor translator, but he also became the assistant to Edward Hearn, the European commissioner of the Knights of Columbus. Unknown to the general public, this order brought together rich Catholics who ensured funds were raised to finance the activities of the Church throughout the whole world.

In 1925, the finances of the Holy See were at their lowest level. Thrown into a world he knew nothing about until then, Spellman quickly understood that he had found his path: he was going to become a financier for the Vatican, and a man of secret missions. His boss, Hearn, introduced him to a circle of financiers and businessmen whom he started to cultivate systematically. Spellman made sure to multiply the small attentions paid to rich visitors to the Vatican. He looked after American political figures passing through Rome, thanks to a network of informers among the concierges of the luxury hotels, who informed him first of any notable arrivals. He attended papal audiences assiduously and, as a gifted photographer, put himself forward to immortalise the events on film. This gave him the opportunity to see the rich visitors a second time so as to hand over the photographs and—why not?—to show them round the city. He thus made himself impossible to ignore in the small milieu of rich American Catholics who spent their winters in Roman aristocratic circles. In this way, Spellman became friends with Nicholas Brady, an American utilities magnate, and his wife Genevieve. Mrs Brady became so infatuated with the young priest that she became his first sponsor, financing his lifestyle and inviting him to social events.

This first glorious feat of Spellman’s attracted the favours of Secretary of State Gasparri. The young priest suggested that Brady offer the cardinal a limousine. Shortly afterwards Brady was installed as a knight of the Supreme Order of Christ and his wife as a papal duchess. The story went the rounds of the Vatican and didn’t fail to come to the ears of Pope Pius XI. The Pope remarked in the young *minutante*’s hearing that his Secretary of State had a lot of luck. The point was made. Spellman sought out another rich American, suggesting he offer His Holiness no less than three cars. The order of precedence was thereby re-established.[11]

Envied by most of the priests of the Secretariat, Spellman made himself indispensable to his superiors very quickly. As early as 1926, he was promoted to monsignor. Pope Pius XI called him “Monsignor Precious”. His lifestyle and his patrimony advanced visibly, so much so that in 1929 he bought $54 000 worth of shares in Warner Brothers, the Hollywood studio. He had now managed to eclipse his boss, Hearn, who was replaced by Count Enrico Galeazzi, a Vatican official who was to become his collaborator. Spellman had his eyes on everything and everybody in the Vatican. He took care to cultivate his friendship with the man who was on the up, the Berlin nuncio, Mgr Pacelli. To do so, he was skilful enough to put himself in the good graces of Sister Pascalina, who had found herself few allies in the Vatican. When Pacelli became pope, Spellman was among the very small circle of men he trusted.

At the centre of power

Events began to accelerate in 1929. Eugenio’s brother, the lawyer Francesco Pacelli, a Vatican advisor, was the Pope’s main liaison officer with the Fascist authorities. He maintained a steady personal relationship with Mussolini. He informed him of the way Vatican affairs were evolving and in return he kept the Pope informed of Italian government plans. His influence antagonised the people in the Secretariat, who felt left by the wayside.

On 11 February, an agreement was signed in the Lateran Apostolic Palace by Mussolini and Secretary of State Gasparri. There were three sections. A diplomatic treaty put an end to the “Roman question” by recognising the sovereignty of the Holy See over the Vatican City as well as the various other buildings it owned in Rome and the papal residence at Castel Gandolfo.

The concordat made the Pontiff into a “sacred and inviolable” person, the equivalent of a monarch by divine right. In exchange, the Vatican recognised the sovereignty of the House of Savoy over the Kingdom of Italy. The financial aspect gave the Pope, in compensation for the annexation of the papal states, an indemnity of 750 million lire and annuity bonds at 5% on a capital of a billion lire. This was the equivalent of almost $1.5 billion nowadays.

Finally, the concordat made Catholicism a state religion, guaranteeing the autonomy and the protection of the Catholic religion: religious marriages had a civic value and schools would be open to religious instruction.

Mussolini needed the Pope's moral authority on which to establish his regime. Soon after he gained power, he put aside his anti-religious speeches in order to court the Vatican. He accepted the need to save the Banco di Roma, which was going through a crisis: in the case of bankruptcy, the Vatican risked losing its capital investment. In return, the Church promised no longer to finance the Italian Popular Party and the Catholic trades unions.

A year later, Gasparri resigned and Eugenio Pacelli became the new Secretary of State. Francesco is credited with having been a deciding influence in his brother's nomination. His personality corresponded to the profile sought by Pius XI: reserved and discreet, scrupulous, hard-working. His experience negotiating concordats, his friendships both on the fundamentalist and "liberal" sides of the Church, rendered him indispensable.

The post of Secretary of State, the equivalent of a prime minister, enabled Pacelli to make a lot of friends and to enlarge his networks. Count Della Torre, the chief editor of *L'Osservatore Romano*, became one of the informers for the future Pope Pius XII. He was one of those close friends whose company the diplomats working in Rome cultivated, so that they could pass on true or false information.

Several sensitive files awaited the future Secretary of State. The first subject of concern, the relationship with Mussolini's regime, was far from settled despite the promises of the Lateran Pacts. At the heart of the dispute were Catholic Action and other Catholic organisations, who were the objects of constant aggression and intimidation by the regime and its partners. In 1931, Pius XI wanted to respond with an encyclical (*Non Abbiamo Bisogno*—We Have No Need) to denounce the regime's totalitarian pretensions concerning the education of the young. But publishing it in Italy was prevented by the Duce's secret services.

It was here that Spellman found the opportunity to carry out his first "secret mission" for the Secretariat of State. Pacelli gave him the task of producing an English version, translated for the offices of Associated Press in Paris. In the train, the secret police kept him under surveillance but didn't

dare arrest him. The story that one of the Pope's emissaries had been obliged to cross the border clandestinely to publish an encyclical spread throughout the world and Spellman's reputation reached new heights. The Fascist intelligence services had been incapable of anticipating this feat, in spite of all the agents they had infiltrated into the Vatican. Mussolini had thought he was being informed of all the Pope's actions: he was surprised by the encyclical and furious with his secret services.

Pacelli arrived on the scene and calmed the situation: he negotiated a laborious compromise with the regime, enabling Catholic youth groups to continue their activities discreetly. It was in the interest of both sides that the Lateran Pacts were respected.

The second priority issue was relations with Soviet Russia. The Bolshevik Revolution had dealt a severe blow to Russian Catholicism. On 23 January 1918, a decree issued by the Council of People's Commissars banned any religious instruction, suppressed church subsidies and forbade the faithful to make donations. The property of the Russian Church was nationalised a few months later. But when the Germans were defeated in 1918, Communist Russia was deprived of its ally in the West. France and Great Britain supported the White Russians' manoeuvres against the Communists, as well as the Poles in their war against Russia.

Facing serious difficulties because of its revolutionary period, and its internal and foreign wars, Russia sought peace. Lenin introduced the NEP —the new economic policy—signed a commercial agreement with Great Britain and held out a hand to Germany and the Vatican. Seen objectively, it was in Pope Benedict XV's interests to protect the Catholic faith in Russia.

An agreement was thus concluded and a papal mission of humanitarian aid was sent in March 1922. In the same year, the Rapallo Agreement enabled diplomatic relations to be resumed between the USSR and Weimar Germany. Secret military cooperation was set up between both states, making France nervous. This opened the way to negotiations between Moscow and Rome, which were carried out in Berlin. Preparing this was left to the nuncio in Berlin, Eugenio Pacelli. But the negotiations turned into a dialogue of the deaf. They served only to intensify the persecutions, as the future pope recognised in a letter from the end of 1927: "It would be an illusion to hope that any agreement can be reached with the present government in Moscow, whose only aim is to destroy religious beliefs in this unfortunate, oppressed country […] although nobody can humanly

predict when and how this abominable regime will collapse."[12] Disillusioned, Pacelli thus adopted a more aggressive attitude—but for this one still had to have the means.

The Vatican didn't have any sources of information on Russia: the bishops were in prison or in exile, the priests under close surveillance. Postal censorship prevented normal communication with Rome. A great number of priests arrested by the Soviet secret services were sent to the prison of Solovki. This was in fact a monastery founded in 1420, set in the middle of the White Sea. The prisoners were employed above all in cutting wood. As early as the beginning of the 1920s, this prison held the first deported priests, Catholic and Orthodox. In the summer of 1928, a few prisoners managed to escape miraculously during a stormy night on a raft by using their coats as sails. After four days at sea, a Norwegian ship picked them up and put them ashore in England. Sometime later, the prisoners published a book revealing their ordeals: *The Island of Tortures and of Death*. In reaction, the Soviet authorities hurriedly sent Maxim Gorki, the regime's official writer, to Solovki with the task of writing a flattering report on this "model prison".[13]

In the light of this, it became a priority for the Church to set up an underground organisation in the USSR. It had to be possible to appoint bishops and give the Church a legitimate authority and a structure. In the middle of the 19th century, when Catholics were persecuted by the Tsars, the Vatican sent priests disguised as peddlers to Russia to replace the imprisoned clergymen. Why not start again? In the fall of 1925, a period in which there was a relative thaw, Pius XI sent Michel d'Herbigny, a French Jesuit, to the Soviet Union for a period of studies, at the invitation of a Russian Orthodox prelate. According to the report on his trip,[14] the situation was even more serious than was imagined.

* * *

Before dawn on 21 April 1926, in Moscow, several people entered the small church of Saint-Louis-des-Français, in the shadow of the Lubyanka, the headquarters of the OGPU (also called the GPU, the KGB's ancestor), the Soviet security service. A tall foreigner introduced himself to them: Michel d'Herbigny, Pope Pius XI's secret emissary. Just before leaving, he had

been consecrated bishop by Pacelli, so that he could appoint others in turn. In the field, there were not many candidates.

Father Pie Eugène Neveu, based in the Donets Basin, was one of them: he had worked in Russia since 1907 as the priest for a community of French and Belgian mining engineers. He had remained there despite the 1917 Revolution and faced police persecution with courage and wile as a clandestine priest. So the French ambassador in Moscow was asked to send for Neveu on some pretext or other. Hardly had he arrived at the Saint-Louis-des-Français Church when he learned that he was going to become the first secret bishop and that he was to be consecrated immediately. D'Herbigny was frightened of being expelled if his activities were ever discovered.

Despite all this, he went with Neveu to Kharkov, then alone on to Odessa, Kiev and Leningrad, to consecrate four bishops without incident. Even in this heroic period, underground operations unfortunately required basic training and a large dose of paranoia. He clearly lacked both. The GPU had spotted him ever since he arrived in Moscow; they kept an eye on him, allowed him to go as he pleased so they could identify the whole network. After he left, the police started rounding up the clandestine bishops. Only Mgr Neveu, the most visible and the most protected, was left untouched, because he was French. He was only able to inform d'Herbigny of the disaster through the French Embassy.

Without anybody having learned anything from this failure, the Vatican sent d'Herbigny on a third trip, on which he was just as much under surveillance and just as useless.

In 1933, the last Catholic bishop in the USSR, Mgr Aleksander Frison, who was already under house arrest, was alleged to have abused children. Accusing people of bad morals was one of the GPU's favourite tactics. After due consideration, Mgr Frison was finally charged with spying for Germany. Father Braun reported that he was shot in June 1937. From 1917 to 1939, almost a thousand Catholic priests living in Russian territory were arrested. Most of them died in prison, in camps or from forced labour. All religious institutions were shut down. Publications of a religious nature were forbidden.

The simple fact that he'd succeeded in collecting information on the spot, had set up networks and come back alive earned d'Herbigny firm recognition from the Secretariat of State. In 1930, he was appointed

chairman of the Committee for Russia, or “Pro-Russia”, with the rank of prefect of congregation. This promotion nonetheless also earned him real enmity within the Curia.

The GPU sent its spies to Paris and Rome. It was suspected of infiltrating the Pro-Russia Committee. On 28 March 1930, Neveu wrote, “It is said in Moscow that apparently our detectives tried to get hold of the Pro-Russia Committee’s records.” The newspaper *La Croix* on 28 April confirmed that this rumour was unfounded. In Rome, d’Herbigny was surrounded by spies. In November 1932, the Alexander Deubner affair erupted. He was the son of Father Jean Deubner,[15] a Catholic martyr, imprisoned from 1923 to 1932, then assassinated in 1936. His sister, Clara Zetkin, was a leading light in the Communist Party of Weimar Germany. Born in 1899, Alexander undertook his clerical studies with the Assumptionists and became a priest in 1926. He was given the Russo-Catholic ministry in Nice and Cannes. Of a rather unstable temperament, he joined the Orthodox Church, then expressed his regrets and turned up, repentant, in Rome. D’Herbigny gave him translation work to do. He was soon accused of being a GPU agent and of having taken documents away which got priests in the USSR arrested. In Poland, the affair was exaggerated to discredit d’Herbigny. Father Ledóchowski, the all-powerful Superior General of the Jesuit order, was increasingly unable to put up with the prominence of this priest, who was overshadowing him in his running of the Jesuits and who had the Pope’s ear.

The Soviet secret services mounted an operation against him and exploited the “story of a woman”, which caused his downfall. Ledóchowski seized the opportunity and had him consigned to a monastery without his being able to defend himself in front of the Pope.[16] Had he been manipulated by Soviet disinformation or had Ledóchowski taken advantage of the scandal to remove d’Herbigny, who was thought to be too imprudent for the position he held? The fact remains that Ledóchowski did move around other pawns like Father Joseph Ledit, who’d gone to the USSR with d’Herbigny. He also looked into possible alliances outside the Church.

One alliance he sought was with the International Anti-Communist Entente (IAE), a sort of anti-Third International, founded by a Protestant lawyer, Theodor Aubert, from Geneva, and a Russian exile, Georges Lodygensky, head of the Red Cross. In the 1920s and 1930s, Aubert became

famous because of the “Conradi affair”, in which he obtained the acquittal of the murderer of the Soviet delegate to the Lausanne Conference in May 1923—causing a serious diplomatic incident with Moscow. In Paris, Aubert, famous because of his triumph, created an international organisation uniting all “European patriots” in the struggle against the Comintern. From having Protestant origins at first, the IAE moved closer and closer to Catholicism. At the end of 1929, the Holy See hardened its attitude towards the USSR. For the IAE, the door was now almost open to effecting a rapprochement with the Curia. The Vatican was prudent and didn’t communicate with it directly, preferring to go through a lay third party. The trade union wing of the IAE, the Russian Christian Workers’ Movement (RCWM), proposed transporting parcels by sea to the USSR via the Finnish border, with the help of friendly sailors.

From 1933, the IAE and its friends created an informal, religiously inspired committee, Pro Deo, under the guidance of Georges Lodygensky. Made up equally of lay people and clerics from the three main Christian confessions—Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox—it set up an aid programme for believers in Russia (sending icons, publications, using the radio) and found emissaries for itself. It started by collaborating unofficially with the Jesuits working in the secret war against communism.

Ledóchowski considered Lodygensky an assistant rather than a full-time partner. In 1936, Associated Press announced that the Vatican was forming a worldwide organisation including Catholics and Protestants, based on the Pro Deo committees already existing in various countries. This angered the Secretariat of State: it felt it was obliged to publish a disclaimer, pointing out that the Pro Deo organisation was a lay body, acting on its own initiative. All ties were then severed, but the Jesuits had had time to salvage the movement’s most useful contacts.

After the d’Herbigny affair, Stalin, now exercising complete power in the USSR, thought the Church was dangerous and never stopped following the files on the Church closely. In the 1930s–1940s, the Russian secret services considered the Papacy the nerve centre of a worldwide spy ring, directly opposing international communism.

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Finally, the Secretariat's third big issue in the 1930s was Germany, its aim being to negotiate a national concordat. Because of his reputation as a Germanophile, Pacelli seemed to be the man for the job, especially because of the links he'd been able to establish with the country's elite, in particular with the Catholic leaders of the Centre Party. As soon as he came to power in January 1933, Hitler asked his Vice-Chancellor, Franz von Papen, to open talks with the leader of the Centre Party, Mgr Ludwig Kaas, and negotiate the terms of a concordat. At this stage, Hitler needed the Pope to legitimise his regime, as Mussolini had done before him. The Pope and his Secretary of State, taken in by the Führer's anti-Marxist talk, walked into the trap and accepted the idea of "depoliticising" the German clergy in exchange for a concordat, all the more generous as it was not respected. They no doubt still believed that the conservatives would be able to keep Hitler under control and to normalise the regime bit by bit. The affair was conducted swiftly and efficiently, and the signing ceremony took place on 20 July 1933. The Centre Party and the Bavarian Catholic Party were disbanded immediately. German Catholics were reassured that their faith was well suited to National Socialism. With the clergy now muzzled, Hitler had his hands free in that respect. During the "Night of the Long Knives" in June 1934, some Catholic leaders were murdered. Church dignitaries and Catholic organisations were thereafter well and truly harassed.

Despite the Concordat's ratification in September 1933, criticism by independent prelates didn't abate. Cardinal Faulhaber, the Archbishop of Munich, delivered a series of anti-Hitler sermons. He was considered the "spiritual leader of Catholic resistance to the National Socialist state" by Himmler's services. The *Völkischer Beobachter*, the Nazi paper, denounced the cardinal as the leader of an "association for vice and degeneration".[17] He was far from having unanimous support. In the inter-war years, the Curia contained very varied currents of opinion. At the other end of the political spectrum, the Austrian Alois Hudal, rector of the German church in Rome, Santa Maria dell'Anima, was close to Nazi ideas, which he thought were compatible with the teachings of Catholicism. In 1936, he published a book that caused a scandal in the Curia: *The Foundations of National Socialism*.

At the beginning of 1937, the Pope wanted to respond and make a point about the violent attacks against Catholic organisations and the press campaigns against the Holy See. The tension between Berlin and Rome was

such that the Sovereign Pontiff was beginning to lose face. A secret conference was organised in January in Rome to bring together the senior German prelates.

Pius XI, in ill health, was nonetheless combative and decided to draw up an encyclical against Nazism in the greatest of secrecy. Pacelli was the only person to work with him on this document. Dated 14 March, *Mit brennender Sorge* (With Burning Concern) was published clandestinely, sent by messengers avoiding roads and police controls, to be delivered in person to 26 German bishops. The document was to be read in Germany during the service of Mass on 22 March to avoid censorship. The tone was moderate but, basically, it firmly condemned the violations of the Concordat and denounced National Socialism's incompatibility with the values of Catholicism.

Its effect was to create a huge surprise and the regime was furious. The Gestapo seized all copies of the encyclical immediately. In a speech given on 1 May, Hitler declared that he wouldn't have his authority challenged in any way. Goebbels had a propaganda booklet printed denouncing the Vatican's financial and sexual scandals. The call was clear: the Church's image had to be undermined. As early as 1935, several lawsuits and press campaigns were launched against the religious orders, which were accused of financial offences: they had placed their money in state loans in the United States, which was against the law forbidding the export of capital. The trials of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul in Cologne in May made press headlines: it seemed the sisters had smuggled wads of banknotes out of the country, hidden under their clothes.

Trials of this kind ended up with condemnations or huge fines and even a sentence of hard labour for the provincial secretary of the order, Sister Wernera. The following year, an even more embarrassing press campaign was launched, with the trial in Koblenz of 276 Franciscans accused of "affront to public decency". The men were charged with homosexuality and were accused of committing paedophiliac acts against the children who had been left in their care for their education. The trial was just as hasty as those held at the same time in Moscow. It seems that a hotch-potch of allegations and accusations was assembled using a few real incidents to start off with.

In 1937, the trials started all over again, more so than ever. As a result 1 100 priests were arrested in Germany, of whom 304 were deported to Dachau. In the eyes of the Nazis, the Catholic Church was no longer just an

internal security matter but had become an international authority to be watched closely. The German intelligence services, just like the Russians, were convinced that the Pope was at the head of a sprawling intelligence network that operated worldwide. They considered the Church an immense secret organisation whose every member played a role, as part of an ensemble orchestrated in the Vatican. The religious orders, especially the Jesuits, were thought to be the most dangerous.

On 19 March, a few days after *Mit brennender Sorge*, Pius XI signed a new encyclical, *Divini Redemptoris* (Divine Redeemer), which this time condemned atheist communism. It was a way of striking a balance for a while, by rejecting both totalitarianisms in a single stroke.

The following year, the atmosphere became funereal. Austria fell under the German yoke in 1938; and with the Kristallnacht in November, the German Jewish population fell victim to the horror of antisemitic violence (119 synagogues were burnt down, more than 100 people died and 20 000 people were deported). Pius XI at last swept aside all diplomatic niceties and finally openly condemned the Nazis' antisemitic policy. At the beginning of 1939, he worked on a new encyclical with the help of an American Jesuit. Rumours of this reached the German clergy. The German secret services had by now had the time to recruit sources within the clergy.

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Of all the belligerents in World War II, Nazi Germany no doubt possessed the largest number of competing intelligence services: there were those in the Air Ministry, in the Navy, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and of course in the Wehrmacht and the SS. Their efforts were no more coordinated against the Vatican than those against other targets. The best one would earn the Führer's respect.

As early as 1933, the Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service) created a small, anti-religious spying unit, transferred to Berlin in 1934 and taken in hand by an unfrocked priest, Albert Hartl, who had unhesitatingly denounced his superior. When a new cardinal or bishop was appointed, it was his team that drew up the information that a ministry or the party requested. Its most valuable member was Joseph Roth, an unfrocked priest who had rubbed shoulders with Hitler before he came to power.

Hartl's team recruited within the clergy by playing on the weaknesses of certain priests, who were either open to blackmail or simply frightened by the implied threat of reprisals. Conrad Gröber, the Archbishop of Freiburg, cooperated with the SS, according to Hartl, for fear that his liaison with his Jewish mistress would be revealed to the public.

According to Hartl's post-war interrogation, his service recruited between 20 and 30 informers in the dioceses, which, given the size of Germany, was not an enormous number. Above all, if the complaints his hierarchy sent him are to be believed, these sources gave hardly any really important information: the targeted priests were seeking above all to get themselves off the hook by handing over harmless information, mixed with sundry rumours.[18]

More important for Hartl was getting hold of an informer in the Berlin nunciature who received all the reports from the German bishops: in all probability, this was Father Werhun, one of Nuncio Cesare Orsenigo's counsellors. Hartl also threw his net over the Catholic universities. He recruited in particular a priest in the Paderborn Faculty of Theology, Professor Joseph Meyer, who agreed to write a study setting out how euthanasia applied to handicapped people was not at all incompatible with theological thinking. To improve his income by doing something useful, Hartl, under a pseudonym, also published rather successful violently anti-Catholic material.

But his star didn't shine for very long. In 1939, his service, the Sicherheitsdienst, merged with the Gestapo run by Heinrich Müller, who already had his own priest-watching service, led by SS *Sturmbannführer* (major) Erich Roth. Müller didn't like Hartl very much: he found his reports too intellectual. The latter drew attention to himself with a series of adventures with women within the Reich Security Main Office: the unfrocked priest was unfortunate enough to boast about it to his colleagues. He crossed the red line by flirting coarsely in a train with a lovely woman, who turned out to be an SS senior dignitary's wife. He was transferred subsequently to Ukraine.

Whatever their setbacks, the German services were informed of the origins of the encyclical *Humani Generis Unitas*, thanks to their sources within the German clergy. A rough copy of this text was sent by the Pope to the Superior General of the Jesuits, Father Wladimir Ledóchowski, who

entrusted its reviewing to Father Enrico Rosa, the editor-in-chief of the Jesuit newspaper *La Civiltà Cattolica*. What was most worrying in this affair was that Rosa was well known at the time for his antisemitic views. And as the Pope's health declined visibly, the least one could say was that the Father wasn't in a hurry to finish his reading. It is quite possible that Ledóchowski wanted to help his friend Pacelli, who was one of the favourites to succeed Pius XI on Saint Peter's throne. There was no doubt that, once published, this encyclical would make the relations between the Church and the Nazi regime permanently conflictual, which was certainly not what the Secretary of State wanted. After Pope Ratti died, it seems that Pacelli ensured that the drafts of the encyclical disappeared in the secrecy of the Vatican archives, or that it was done for him to please him.

* * *

Pacelli's stature in the Church, the confidence that Pope Pius XI had had in him until the end, his function as camerlengo (chamberlain), his diplomatic experience: everything came together just at the right time so he could be elected easily on the third round of voting in the conclave. The political crisis had created a political pope. The cardinals elected Pacelli because they thought he was quick-witted and experienced diplomatically. He spoke more languages than any of his predecessors. But he did have his faults: he was a secretive and timid man, if not fearful. In front of his family, he showed he could be very sensitive. He was temperamentally close to paranoia sometimes. Before an appointment was confirmed at the Vatican, he ordered enquiries to be made about the person concerned. And he was the first pope to bug part of the Vatican. In the very first days of his pontificate, he decided to have his library, where he received important visitors, fitted with a sound recording system. Even the Secretariat didn't know. Only Father Leiber, the head of Radio Vatican, and a handful of technicians were in the know. They worked in an anti-chamber next to the library. Installing the microphones was the work of Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of the wireless, who had already set up the telephone exchange for the Vatican and a radio link with the summer residence at Castel Gandolfo.[19]

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Just after he was appointed, Pius XII was confronted with the race towards war: Hitler's occupation of Czechoslovakia led the French and the British to give up their policy of appeasement and offer their help to countries threatened with aggression. Pius XII was in favour of attempting a new reconciliation with Hitler: he wanted to be the "Pope of Peace".

Unknown to the rest of the Curia, Robert Leiber was authorised to make the most risky contacts. He therefore met a doubtful dealer in military equipment who supplied the Third Reich, the Swedish industrialist Birger Dahlerus. The Luftwaffe depended on his supplies, which were forbidden by the victors of 1918. Dahlerus obtained Goering's agreement to go to London to discuss peace on the basis of an Italo-Vatican plan. But while Goering was reporting to Hitler, Britain declared war.[20]

On 5 May 1939, Pope Pius XII proposed organising a peace conference for the main governments involved. This initiative produced no response. He thought pragmatically that he didn't have much choice but to work with Hitler since he was the one in power. His moderate attitude towards the Nazi regime irritated the British and French secret services and even some of the prelates.

2

FACING THE NAZIS

DOUBLE PLAY AND FALSE PRETENCES, 1940–1943

“Your Holiness, appoint me at the head of a French diocese!”

“That’s enough, Tisserant. There’s no question of it, it’d be provoking them. You won’t budge from here!”

The exchange of words was tense. Pope Pacelli wasn’t used to anybody raising his voice in his presence or holding out against him. The massive Cardinal Eugène Tisserant was his exact opposite, both temperamentally and physically. For several years now, the Frenchman had been the Fascist spies’ favourite target. It must be said that in this year of 1940 he barely concealed his dislike for the Vichy regime of Marshal Pétain or his liking for General de Gaulle. His comings and goings, his meetings and his proposals, were regularly reported to the head of the Fascist state. A large man, with a salt-and-pepper beard and a stentorian voice, the cardinal was a big smoker of Havana cigars and wasn’t exactly the sort of spy to pass through walls. In the Curia, it was whispered that “fortunately the Pope doesn’t trust him”, considering him too reckless. And everybody had a good laugh about his clashes with Sister Pascalina, who really detested him (the feeling was mutual).

The Pope's silences and murmurings

In contrast to his ebullient cardinal, Pope Pius XII offered a rather reassuring figure for the Axis forces. His first official act was to court Hitler. He explained this to an indignant Sister Pascalina: "There are millions of Catholic believers whose spirit has been ensnared by Hitler. And these blinded souls would be lost to our Holy Mother the Church if we acted in the open or in an extreme manner. To save these souls, the Holy Father must act with discretion. Hitlerism must, of course, be destroyed, but it must be done subtly."[1] His appeasing attitude was nonetheless doomed to failure.

The German invasion of Poland cut communications between the Vatican and the Polish Church. For two years, the Nazis tried methodically to eradicate the institution of Polish Catholicism. Poland was to be used as a laboratory for all the Nazi-occupied countries. Out of the six bishops in the country, soon there was only one left. Several hundred priests were sentenced to forced labour or deported. Four hundred nuns were shut up in a work camp under extreme conditions. The bishops' residences were seized and ransacked, the seminaries emptied. Certain churches were destroyed with explosives. The Holy See nonetheless hesitated to condemn these acts publicly for fear of giving the Nazis an excuse for committing further persecutions.

As for the east of Poland, this was incorporated by force into the USSR. The Archbishop of Lemberg (later Lvov or Lviv), Mgr Andrei Sheptytsky (or Szeptycki), saw there an opportunity for missionary work: since his territory was now part of Russia, he felt invested with the right to appoint and send bishops and priests throughout the whole of the USSR. An American Jesuit, Father Walter Ciszek, and a Russian Jesuit, Nestrow, were recruited as workers and undertook a trip to the Urals, carrying false papers. In the light of his experience in past years, Pius XII wouldn't have allowed such a venture. When a message from Sheptytsky informed the Vatican, Cardinal Tisserant, the Prefect for the Congregation for the Eastern Church, answered coldly that the operation was untimely. It was too late.

Another priest took all sorts of risks to inform the Vatican. Father Moskwa, who was born in Switzerland in 1910, graduated in philosophy from Cracow University and came to study theology at the Jesuit Gregorian University of Rome. Ordained a priest according to the Oriental rite, he

carried out his novitiate in Poland and then became the rector of a seminary in the Ukraine. With the Russian invasion at the end of 1939, he quit his cassock and took to the life of an oil worker. After several adventures, he managed to reach Rome in 1940 and gave the Pope greetings from the Metropolitan Bishop of Lvov, Andrei Sheptytsky, together with a report giving details of religious persecutions in Poland under Soviet occupation.

He thought that the Bolsheviks had already deported more than 500 000 Ukrainians without, however, succeeding in undermining the religious fervour of the population, which continued to go to church. Moskwa agreed to go back to Poland, where he in fact served as an infiltrated agent.[2] In February the nuncio in Hungary informed the Vatican that Father Moskwa had managed to get across the Polish border with the help of a guide, and then went to Lvov. Two months later, the nuncio indicated that "Polish refugees finding themselves in Hungary had set up an underground radio thanks to which they could communicate with the [Archbishop] of Lvov".[3] But on 30 June there was a sudden reversal of fortune: the Curia learnt that Moskwa had been arrested in Russian territory, near the Hungarian border. Imprisoned and tortured, he didn't reveal to the Russians that he was a priest and declared he was an agent of Hungarian intelligence. This version protected the Vatican but condemned him to death: he was executed in a Kiev prison on 7 July 1941.

But that wasn't the end of intelligence activities in Poland. In December 1940, Nuncio Angelo Rotta suggested using a priest who had offered his services to organise a clandestine courier link between Poland and Hungary. But this offer of service was rejected because the man had been expelled from the Jesuit order in 1938. In his stead, it was the Franciscan Father Peter Wilk-Wilkoslawski who was chosen for a new "pastoral mission" to the deported Poles in Hungary. He very quickly discovered that the Nazis had distorted one of Pius XII's encyclicals so that Poles would believe that the Pope agreed with Nazi ideology.

In 1946, the Vatican services got their hands on two suitcases of documents which had belonged to Mgr Antoni Kwiatkowski, a former Soviet Union priest, then a former employee of Radio Vatican, who'd become an agent of the fleeing Polish Army. They contained a treasure of NKVD (Soviet secret police) archives giving details of several operations, arrests and interrogation methods, not to mention the logistics of how

political prisoners were deported, together with photographic evidence. On his own initiative, Kwiatkowski had undertaken a wide-ranging inquiry into communism. His allegiance still remains a mystery, since a Polish communist newspaper accused him in 1950 of having been a Gestapo agent. At the end of the war, he vanished and was spotted in Great Britain. All the same, his trove of archives offered the Vatican an incomparable source of information on how the NKVD worked.

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Several documents show that, in the spring of 1942, the Pope was informed of the mass extermination of Jews in Germany, Poland and the Ukraine. Mgr Sheptytsky wrote to him from Lvov that the Nazi regime was even worse than the communists and that more than 100 000 Jews had already been killed in the Ukraine. Between July and October 1941, a mobile extermination unit, helped by Christian partisans, had massacred 18 000 Jews from Kovno, including 5 000 children. A report by the Catholic resistance worker Margarete Sommer circulated among the bishops of Germany but did not reach the Vatican because it was blocked by the nuncio in Berlin, Mgr Orsenigo.

A few months later, an SS officer, Kurt Gerstein, who had a conscience, asked the assistant bishop of Berlin, an anti-Nazi, to transmit his evidence of the atrocities to Rome.[4] This was done but the report was suppressed. At the end of 1942, the British ambassador, D'Arcy Osborne, handed the Pope a joint report by the Allies concerning the massacre of the Jews. At the time, the Holy See had received corroborating messages and reports from no fewer than nine countries. It was no longer possible to plead ignorance, but these reports remained in Rome; they were not circulated among the bishops. Osborne pleaded in vain for the atrocities to be publicly denounced. In his Christmas message of 1942, Pius XII was content to say a few, very allusive sentences, which were not at all offensive to the Germans.

Without having the same information networks, the French resistance group Témoignage Chrétien, on the contrary, asserted in its *Cahiers d'information* that at the end of 1942 hundreds of thousands of Jews had been put to death in the gas chambers. It is probable that this publication, 25 000 copies of which were published and handed out by volunteers to all the

bishoprics, played a not negligible role in the handful of bishops' courageous denunciation of the fate of French Jews. The pastoral letter by the Archbishop of Toulouse, Mgr Jules Saliège, read out during Mass on 23 August 1942 by the priests of his diocese, was the most spectacular example of Christian resistance under Vichy (a position which represented only a minority of the French clergy at the time). The senior prelates in Vichy France refused to see that the Vélodrome d'Hiver (the Vel' d'Hiv') round-up was the precursor of an extermination policy.

In May 1943, the Secretariat of State produced a lucid note on the situation in Poland: "Jews. Situation Dreadful. In Poland, there were about 4 500 000 of them before the war; their number is at present estimated at 100 000, including all those who have come from other German-occupied countries."[5]

Another source of horror and confusion was the massacres committed by the new antisemitic Croatian state and the Ustasha movement—which was anti-Serbian and pro-Catholic. They occurred in the spring of 1941, under the German occupation, which had been undertaken to dismember Yugoslavia. The regime's new strongman, Ante Pavelić, was a former lawyer and nationalist deputy, the founder of the Ustasha. He was responsible for many terrorist acts, carried out from Mussolini's Italy, especially the assassination of King Alexander of Yugoslavia and of Louis Barthou, the French minister of foreign affairs, in Marseilles in October 1934.[6] Proclaimed head of state with the blessing of the Italians and the Germans, Pavelić set up a totalitarian regime with an extermination policy aimed at anybody who was not Croatian and Catholic, that is to say, half the country.

The agreement between Hitler and Pavelić, sealed during a meeting at the Berghof in the summer of 1941, offered Germany drawing rights on the raw materials of the new satellite state. And the Ustasha applied an anti-Jewish policy modelled on that of the Nazis. The leaders of the Croatian Church were initially happy with the new order, which in their view would stop the decline of Catholicism in the region. Mgr Aloysius Stepinac, the Archbishop of Zagreb and Primate of Yugoslavia, even organised an audience for Ante Pavelić with the Pope, presenting him as a champion of Christianity. However, Pius XII remained cautious and refrained from recognising the Croatian state.

As soon as they were in power in April 1941, the Ustasha really got under way with the genocide. From June 1941 onwards, the German Army was busy with Operation Barbarossa against the USSR, and so the Croats were left with a free hand. They committed massacres on a grand scale. Whole villages were razed to the ground; Serbs were killed with knives or hanged alive from butcher's hooks, their eyes gouged out. By the end of the summer, there were 100 000 victims. The Ustasha didn't bother to hide their crimes: they wanted to terrorise the surviving Serbs and force them to convert to Catholicism.[7]

Branko Bokum, a young official in the Yugoslavian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, quit his country after the German invasion of 1941. At the request of his superiors, he reached Rome and tried to alert the Pope to the massacres committed by the Ustasha, carrying with him a very damning dossier of evidence. The atrocities were documented by photographs taken, not secretly, but in quite an official manner, as he recounted: "On the first photo, I discovered an Orthodox church in the village of Glina. In front of it was a pile of corpses, on the top of which two Ustasha were about to throw the body of an Orthodox parish priest. On the left, a Catholic cleric contemplated the scene. On the following photograph, an Ustasha lifting an axe is about to decapitate a priest. Other Ustasha are laughing in the background. The third shot was of an Ustasha brandishing a knife dripping with blood. At his feet lay the bodies of several women and children. My eyes were drawn to the naked body in the foreground of a young boy who couldn't be more than three years old."[8]

Branko left his file with the Secretariat of State. Contrary to all expectations, he wasn't given an audience: Italian counter-espionage had received an anonymous letter (most likely drawn up by the Croatian Embassy, which was kept informed by a source from inside the Vatican) denouncing him as a communist agent provocateur, asserting that the crimes denounced in his dossier had been committed by communists. This intervention was enough to have the dossier filed away. The young man then joined the Rome Red Cross and notably helped Jews (by obtaining false papers, money and hideouts for them) in collaboration with the representative of the Yugoslav government in exile and the British ambassador, D'Arcy Osborne.

After a period of uncomfortable silence, Archbishop Stepinac decided to condemn the abuses committed by the Ustasha and those of the Catholic priests who were mixed up in it all. As a result the Franciscan Miroslav Filipović-Majstorović was nicknamed the “Demon of Jasenovac”, a concentration camp where 40 000 Jews and Serbs were killed. Several foreign press correspondents corroborated the involvement of priests in the genocide.

The first to raise his voice against this evil was the Bishop of Mostar, Mgr Alojzije Mišić, who persuaded Mgr Stepinac to condemn the atrocities committed against the Jews. This had no effect. In the autumn of 1941, even the Germans remaining on the spot considered that Pavelić was going too far and considered replacing him.

In November, a synod of Croatian bishops politely criticised the increase of forced conversions of Serbs and called upon Pavelić to treat the Jews more humanely. This had no effect. In all, the number the regime killed was estimated at between 300 000 and 400 000 people.

The Holy See remained stubbornly silent, not wanting to anger a pro-Catholic government. To obtain an explanation, Mgr Montini summoned an Ustasha representative in March 1942. The latter retorted that the allegations were pure “rumours” without any foundation in truth. The following month, Mgr Stepinac himself sent the Vatican a nine-page memorandum giving details of the Pavelić regime’s atrocities. In the spring of 1942, the Vatican could no longer plead ignorance. It kept up to date a list of clergymen who would have to be punished at the right time for taking part in the massacres. Some cardinals like Mgr Tisserant had put pressure on Pius XII to denounce the genocide by means of an encyclical. No result. The Pope let Stepinac sort things out for himself without giving him any directives. From July 1943 onwards, Stepinac ensured that the genocide was firmly denounced by messages read out from the pulpit throughout the country. The regime started determinedly arresting the priests who relayed his message.

Secret negotiations

Meanwhile, Pius XII was playing another game. Certain German officers opposed to Hitler (including General Ludwig Beck, the Army’s former Chief of Staff) had plotted to get rid of Hitler in the autumn of 1939 and

conclude a separate peace. Before launching themselves into a perilous venture which could end up in civil war, they wanted to obtain guarantees that the Western democracies would not take advantage of the situation. Pius XII appeared to be a trustworthy third party, able to help them obtain these guarantees. They therefore appointed an anti-Nazi Catholic lawyer living in Rome, Josef Müller, himself in contact with Father Leiber, to sound the Pope out.

Mark Riebling described Josef Müller as a self-taught lawyer of robust peasant origins, a beer-loving Bavarian with sky-blue eyes, who was a hero of the Great War, having been awarded the Iron Cross.[9] As early as the beginning of 1934, he was on the list of anti-Nazi Catholics drawn up by the SS. Arrested by the Gestapo that year by Himmler in person, he stood up for his convictions. Himmler decided to let him go perhaps because he was impressed by his courage or because he thought he was inoffensive.

Müller was contacted by Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich to save a Catholic printing company in difficulties. He liaised with Faulhaber's political secretary and confidant, Mgr Johannes Neuhäusler. The latter got into the habit of entrusting certain sensitive files to Müller, which made him a de facto clandestine operator. With the Concordat barely signed, it became necessary to list violations of that agreement. Müller's lawyer's office became the point where the reports were coordinated. So as to investigate the incidents that had been reported, Müller in turn recruited agents, friends and colleagues who were in touch with responsible Nazis.

Müller increased the number of return trips he made between Berlin and Rome in order to meet Leiber, to whom he transmitted the detailed accounts of the persecutions that Catholics suffered within the Reich. In 1939, communications became all the more numerous. Despite the Concordat, the spying unit of the unfrocked Nazi priest Hartl kept a very close eye on the bishops' and cardinals' mail. It was therefore necessary to send messengers. The Cardinal of Munich's secretary, Neuhäusler, appealed to an unusual Catholic woman (one has to make the best of things), Ida Franziska Schneidhuber, an author of books for children and a film critic, who was "a divorcee and a lesbian but devoted to the faith". After all, who was Neuhäusler to judge her? A Jesuit priest therefore deposited the reports at her place and she made sure they were taken to Rome. The system worked until Ida was arrested and deported in 1942. Müller ensured the delivery of the most important items: as an amateur pilot, he took advantage of his

pleasure flights to land at Merano in the north of Italy; there an emissary from Leiber arrived to fetch them.

In September 1939, Müller was summoned by Admiral Canaris's office. The person he spoke to, Colonel Hans Oster, led him to understand that his activities were known to the service and that his family could suffer from the consequences of his dangerous game. However, an arrangement was possible: Admiral Canaris wanted to have a channel of communications open with the Vatican. Müller refused. Oster revealed to him that officers of the Abwehr were favourably inclined, with other high-ranking officers of the Army, to the overthrow of Hitler, by assassination too. The Army would only get rid of Hitler if it was sure of securing an honourable peace with the Allies. The anti-Hitler officers needed a respected intermediary to start discussions. Müller accepted the proposal and reported to Rome. He returned with an agreement in principle from the Pope to open discussions. Leiber was his only intermediary with the Pope. In the event of things going wrong, Pius XII had to be able to declare that he had never met Müller. Pius XII has often been described as extremely cautious, and he definitely was. But he took quite a considerable risk opening up this channel of secret negotiations with the clandestine opposition. It is likely that the dispositions of the plotters corresponded to what he wanted: a conservative, well-controlled Germany that would not try to attack its neighbours.

Canaris's gamble had succeeded. He'd cover the Bavarian lawyer's activities in the simplest way: by recruiting him. It was simply a matter of staying as close as possible to the truth: the Abwehr gave him the job of tracking down pacifist Italian and German agents who were trying to get in touch with the Vatican in connection with the plot. The Gestapo was informed very officially of this recruitment. Müller now had a concrete reason for his comings and goings between Germany and Italy. In three years he went no fewer than 150 times to Rome.

But another espionage service, the SS's Unit II/B, was wondering about these many comings and goings. More precisely, it was agent Hermann Keller who was wondering. This former Benedictine monk had been exiled to Palestine following an attempt at fiddling the election of the prior of his abbey. When he returned to Germany, he was recruited by Hartl. During a mission to Switzerland, he renewed his ties with his prelate friends, who knew nothing about his reconversion and who talked too much. Their indiscretions revealed that there was a plot against Hitler, to which the

Vatican was party. Very excited, Keller drew up a report which went up the Nazi hierarchy as far as Heydrich.

There was a blast of thunder in the Abwehr. They had to react very quickly, before a more in-depth inquiry was ordered. To ward off the danger, Canaris had Müller draw up a confidential intelligence report, supposedly sent by the Vatican, which developed a fanciful military *coup d'état* plot. As leaders of the plot, the document identified a general recently killed in Poland and another, one of Hitler's fanatical supporters. Müller was presented as a bagman. Canaris hurried to present "his" report to Hitler, who read it and, on discovering the name of the devoted general, didn't believe it for one second. Then, acting sheepishly, Canaris went to explain to Heydrich that Hitler was furious about the rumours of a military plot, which were obviously a rather clumsy attempt at disinformation, and that it was probably better not to mention the subject again.

Keller, sure of his scoop, wasn't discouraged and sent other spies to Rome: a Benedictine monk who tried unsuccessfully to worm information out of Father Leiber; a Swedish journalist, Gabriel Ascher, who contacted Mgr Kaas without any more success; and others. Keller went himself to Rome and openly bragged about his links with the German intelligence services. These indiscretions, reported to Heydrich, got him transferred to Paris.

January 1940: the Pope received the British ambassador, D'Arcy Osborne, privately and announced that the following month there was going to be a big German military offensive against Holland. The plotting generals were ready to overthrow the government if they were guaranteed a "just" peace with Great Britain. In this scenario, they would hold on to Austria but would leave Poland and Czechoslovakia. The British were very sceptical because of the Venlo affair in which they had been humiliated the previous November when they thought they were making contact with opponents of Hitler.[10]

The Pope also warned the Belgian and French ambassadors of an imminent German attack, and then repeated his warning several times to the British ambassador. The latter was convinced of the Pontiff's sincerity. Talks finally started in March.

Colonel Oster gave Müller some questions; he transmitted them to Pius XII via Leiber. The Pope submitted them to Osborne via Mgr Kaas, who

cabled London. Finally the British set out the following conditions:

Hitler to be assassinated.

A regime observing the rule of law to be re-established in Germany.

A commitment not to wage war in the West.

Poland to be evacuated.

The self-determination of other occupied countries (Austria can remain German).

An armistice to be negotiated through the Pope.

The problem was that the officers were simply unable to carry out the plan of eliminating Hitler. Some of them who were able to meet him carrying their weapons could have shot him (and almost certainly been killed themselves in doing so), but none of them were brave enough once they were on the spot. It was the paradox of German officers: they had been trained too well to give absolute obedience.

At the end of April, there was a new alert: the attack on the West, already put off several times, was to take place at the beginning of May. Disillusioned, Canaris's team let the Pope know that the intriguing generals were incapable of acting, but that the invasion was imminent. On 7 May, the Pope sent his Under-Secretary, Mgr Montini, to forewarn Ambassador Osborne and the French diplomat Jean Rivière: he supplied precise tactical information on the forthcoming offensive and warned them that parachutists would be involved and sabotage operations would be used.[11] Alas, the chancelleries concerned didn't believe this new message at all, and, like the previous ones in February and March, it was not acted upon. They were wrong not to.

Quickly joined by Italy, Germany carried out lightning attacks on the Low Countries, Belgium and France, and thereby isolated the Vatican. Pius XII met the Allied diplomats within the walls of the city-state, which Mussolini disdainfully called a "nest of spies". The Vatican police reinforced the area and created a counter-espionage section. The Swiss Guards increased their numbers over the months: from 600 at the beginning of the war to 1 200 in 1944. They built up stocks of weapons and gas

masks. Air raid shelters were erected hastily and an armoured crypt was constructed to house the most precious ancient manuscripts.

But another German service, that of the Reich Air Ministry, was listening in and intercepted two telegrams from the Belgian ambassador to the Vatican, giving details of the German war plans. They referred to a source that had “left Berlin on 29 April and arrived in Rome on 1 May”. This information, far too precise, ran the risk of incriminating Josef Müller, the source in question. Canaris showed his cool head once again: he decided to send him to Rome again to inquire into the source of the leak. The bigger the lie, the better. So, for the sake of the job, Müller wanted to have a list of German secret agents in Rome. He hurriedly gave it to Father Leiber once in Rome. It included people already under suspicion, as well as Father Joachim Birkner, one of Hartl’s recruits in the Vatican’s secret archives. When he returned to Berlin, Müller declared that he had identified the source in the person of a Belgian Jesuit, which didn’t risk anything as the latter had already left on a mission in the depths of Africa.

However, an Abwehr counter-espionage officer who was not part of the conspiracy did not believe this story and instead suspected Müller. He sent the Swedish journalist Ascher back to Rome; he then came back with a damning report but no material proof. Canaris dismissed the file, judging it “hardly conclusive”. During the months that followed, there was a period of stasis. As Churchill had come to power in England, any prospect of negotiation with Germany was now dismissed. It wasn’t until the Americans entered the war that Müller started up again.

A lot of ink has flowed about the “silences” of Pius XII with regard to the Nazi atrocities, of which he was well informed, and it is not the aim of this book to settle the controversy. His defenders have presented his secret negotiations with Hitler’s opponents—they were very real—as proof that he was not the “Hitler’s Pope” that some have wanted to call him. It’s up to us to judge. But the crucial testimony of the man who coordinated a good part of the Vatican’s intelligence activities and secret operations at that time can be placed on record: as the American historian Michael Phayer reports,[12] Father Leiber confided many years later that Pius XII dreamed of playing the role of the peace-bearing diplomat, the saviour of Western Europe. To maintain his credibility, the Pope had to preserve the neutral status of the Vatican City. He had in mind the role of the Benedict XV at the end of World War I. But he made a big mistake when negotiating with the German

resistance: he had hoped for a powerful Germany, rid of Hitler but with its 1933 borders intact. He underestimated the ambitions of the German military, some of whom were indeed opposed to the Nazi regime but not to its territorial conquests. On their side, the Allies refused a negotiated peace and didn't want to consider anything but an unconditional surrender. So, concludes Phayer, Pius XII had delusions about what he could accomplish and sacrificed part of his moral credibility on the altar of his diplomatic ambitions.

The priests who resisted … and the spies who targeted them

For its part, the German clergy were divided between being cautious and wanting to resist the Nazis. As Pius XII believed that his nuncio in Berlin wasn't critical of National Socialism, he preferred to use other orders, like the Jesuits and the Dominicans, to communicate with the clergy. On 26 May 1941, a conference in Berlin brought together the higher echelons of both orders. They made up an unofficial group of seven secret agents, which they christened the "Committee of the Orders". They received dispensation from living according to the rules of their orders and had to wear civilian clothes. They used a coded language on the telephone and lived semi-clandestinely. Father Rösch was their coordinator: he set up a network throughout the country, recruiting messengers, secretaries, telephone operators and even officers. The intelligence which the seven emissaries gleaned was centralised at the Jesuit HQ in Munich.

The committee grew in size and in April 1942 recruited a Jesuit priest, Alfred Delp, who was to be one of its most brilliant agents. According to Riebling's description, "he wore secular clothes, a suit and a tie, which gave him that look of a wrinkled owl and he rarely appeared without a cigar in his hand, his head crowned with a cloud of smoke. Within the resistance, he acquired the status of a sort of people's tribune. His parishioners took down his sermons in shorthand and exchanged them on pieces of folded paper the size of a dice, to avoid being spotted."[13] Müller continued to maintain the liaison with the Vatican, even if Rösch was also in contact with Leiber.

It is not part of our undertaking to list all the clergy who, in one way or another, resisted the Nazis. On the other hand, those who ran networks from within the Vatican, although they'd have done so on their own initiative, do

enter the framework of our story, because they were allowed to do so. We come across Cardinal Tisserant again, who, ignored at the beginning of the war, gradually became an indispensable figure. A resistance network had sprung up between Fribourg in Switzerland and Rome, linked to the Témoignage Chrétien group. On 3 April 1943, Robert de Leusse wrote to Tisserant: “General de Gaulle was very pleased to learn that I was in touch with you and he asked me to be the go-between with Your Eminence to express his gratitude.”[14] From that day, Tisserant became de Gaulle’s unofficial representative to the Pope.

After 1943, the German occupation of Rome increased the numbers of Jews and political opponents seeking refuge. Tisserant was one of the people who committed themselves fully, as this letter dated 28 April 1945 testifies: “I gave hospitality to an Italian Jew, Comm. Cesare Verona, representing the Remington typewriter company, whom I had known since 1933, and a French Senator, Mr Musso from Corsica, whom the Italians had taken into captivity and held on the Isle of Elba; he had succeeded in escaping by crossing Piombino while the Germans were transferring Corsicans and other hostages held by the Italians in their camps […] I also took in from one to three members of the Perrone family, owners of the Roman newspaper *Il Messaggero* […] One day, I was threatened with being searched, the day when the Germans installed their military tribunal in the house next door to mine; but I was able to telephone fairly quickly to Cardinal Maglione from a neighbouring house, after getting my two visitors out of the house (fortunately we only had two left on 6 May) without the Germans ever knowing they had left. I also looked after a number of other individuals who were in need: Jews and Jewesses, various English prisoners in the countryside, Yugoslavs, Greeks and even some Russians.”

Another character stands out from among the priests. He was a big, bulky Irishman, a former boxer, 40 years old. The son of a policeman, Mgr Hugh O’Flaherty[15] was born in Cork in 1898. The eldest of four brothers, he was brought up in the Irish countryside and educated by priests. He had frequented the Vatican since 1922: he was a student, then vice-rector, of a pontifical university. He held doctorates in canonical law and philosophy. Posted to Haiti and Czechoslovakia, O’Flaherty returned to Rome in 1938. He was known for his talents as a golfer and on the greens often came across Count Galeazzo Ciano, the Italian minister of foreign affairs, or the

British ambassador, D'Arcy Osborne. The latter was the quintessential British gentleman: with exquisite manners, charming, always well turned-out, a confirmed bachelor. Like most British ambassadors to the Vatican, Osborne was a Protestant: London didn't want to lay itself open to accusations of partiality. Against all expectations, O'Flaherty the Irishman and Osborne the Englishman became friends. Secrecy brought them closer together. With the financial help of the ambassador, the priest set up a secret service to help escaped POWs. He lived and worked (these things can't be made up) within the German College, the Teutonicum, which was not in Vatican territory but benefited from its protection. It was the most unlikely place in Rome from which to run an anti-Nazi spy ring.

At the beginning of the war, the Vatican, as a neutral state, offered to house diplomats from countries that were enemies of the Axis powers. The British Foreign Office was reluctant to agree because it would be complicated to guarantee the confidentiality of its communications with its ambassador in these conditions. So, knowing his dispatches were being read by the Italian services, Osborne started to put out disinformation. He soon received a secret radio transmitter. He was accommodated in the Santa Martha hospice, where he had four bedrooms at his disposal, to live in and accommodate his secretary and his valet. As we have seen, he was a target of choice for the Italian intelligence services, who suspected him of staying on just to spy on them.

From 1941 onwards, tens of thousands of Allied soldiers were being held as prisoners in camps throughout Italy. In line with international conventions, the Pope wanted to send emissaries to visit the camps. He appointed Mgr Borgoncini Duca as his nuncio, but as he didn't speak English, he made Mgr O'Flaherty his interpreter. O'Flaherty, more sensitive to the fate of the prisoners he visited, agreed to note down messages which would be read out by Radio Vatican so their families would know that they were still alive. He also put an effort to get Red Cross parcels distributed to the prisoners. Little by little, O'Flaherty became these prisoners' best advocate within the Vatican, and his zeal irritated the Italian military, which tried unsuccessfully to have him withdrawn.

But this was nothing compared to the hatred that Herbert Kappler, an SS *Obersturmbannführer* (lieutenant colonel), had for him. Kappler directed the Rome Gestapo. Self-assured, fair-haired, blue-eyed, with a scar on his cheek, he was the caricature of the SS officer that Hollywood was

particularly fond of portraying. He wore a death's head ring, on the inside of which was engraved "To Herbert from his Himmler". At no. 20 Via Tasso, he reigned over the Gestapo HQ, which was also a prison. Resistance members were interrogated and tortured there, as were Jews and Italians who were unfortunate to have sheltered enemy soldiers. Unhappy in his marriage, Kappler multiplied his feminine conquests in Italian high society, not counting a young Dutch woman who became one of his agents. Kappler had no son with his wife, but he adopted a young boy from the *Lebensborn*[16] programme, Wolfgang, whom he looked after assiduously. In the autumn of 1942, Kappler was ordered by Himmler to watch very carefully over Osborne, the British ambassador, and Harold Tittmann, the American chargé d'affaires, representing President Roosevelt. They were both lodged at Santa Martha. Kappler hadn't waited to get into the Vatican. Among his favourite targets there was the Jesuit Father Robert Leiber and Mgr Kaas, the former head of the German Centre Party. The strategic point of access was the Teutonicum residence. Kappler succeeded without too much difficulty in recruiting the vice-rector, who was a Nazi sympathiser. But watching over the residents was too blatant: Mgr Kaas managed to get Cardinal Faulhaber in Munich to recall his indiscreet vice-rector.

At the beginning of 1942, Kappler received the added support of an officer, Helmut Loos. He had distinguished himself in 1940 by recruiting a Catholic German nobleman, Alfred von Kageneck, who had easy access to Father Leiber, a friend of his family. Kageneck made his first visit to Rome in May 1940 during which he obtained information about the Pope's feelings towards Hitler and the influence of the German bishops and cardinals within the Holy See. The report enchanted the heads of the Reich Security Main Office and propelled Loos to the position of a star. He sent Kageneck regularly to Rome in the months that followed. Unfortunately, Loos was the victim of a very deft disinformation scheme. As early as his first visit to Leiber, Kageneck confessed straightaway his true mission. After consulting his superior and the Pope, Leiber gave Kageneck tailor-made information for his handlers.

In May 1942, the Italian military police searched an apartment in the Via Fornaci, near the Vatican, rented by a Finnish businessman. The Italian military service, the SIM (the Servizio Informazioni Militare), had detected encrypted transmissions there. The occupant was a German called Ernst Hamm. He was part of a Soviet network. He was not in direct

communication with the head of the network but with a young woman who was arrested on his indications. She was the mistress of a Russian officer, Hermann Marley, who was arrested in turn, causing the whole network to collapse. To save his skin, the Russian agreed to continue to communicate with his central office by giving it SIM-supplied information.

When he was asked to deliver a message to the resident in an apartment in north-east Rome, Marley led the SIM agents to a new Russian spy. The man's name was Alexander Kurtna. Of Orthodox Estonian origin but a convert to Catholicism, he entered the Jesuit seminary at Dubno, in Poland, in 1935. A brilliant pupil, he was invited to join the Russian College in the Vatican. In 1939, he was given a grant from the Estonian government to carry out research on medieval history in the Vatican archives. He nonetheless left the Russicum in 1940 because he was thought to be unsuitable for the priesthood. He pursued his research in the archives while living off a bit of translation work for the Congregation for the Eastern Church.

How surprising it was that Kurtna could travel without any problems between Rome and Estonia in wartime. In the spring of 1941, he offered his services to the German Historical Institute (a Nazi services' front), which agreed to finance his research. A few months beforehand, in Estonia, Kurtna got in touch with the Soviet secret services, who showed they were interested in his familiarity with Cardinal Tisserant, whose work included training priests intending to enter the USSR clandestinely, as we have seen. So it was that, unusually, he obtained a grant from the Academy of Sciences in Moscow. But who was Kurtna really working for? Berlin or Moscow?

In 1942, the German Historical Institute in Rome transferred the handling of the Estonian to Kappler, who, desperately lacking reliable information sources about the Vatican, engaged Kurtna, knowing, it seems, that he was an agent of the Soviets. He expected Kurtna to give the same information on the Vatican that he transmitted to Moscow. Like the Russians, Heydrich was obsessed by Cardinal Tisserant's activities. He was persuaded that Tisserant was sending hosts of clandestine priests into Eastern Europe to convert the populations conquered by the Reich to Catholicism. On the other hand, Kurtna could also be useful for misleading the Russians if he was given false information to transmit to them, believing it was authentic. It was twisted but it was precisely this type of reasoning that made Kappler more of a valuable spy than a torturer, of which the SS

had so many. Naturally, Kappler didn't forget to cover himself vis-à-vis his superiors, by informing Berlin that he was in control of all aspects of the operation.

The only risk that Kappler had not foreseen was that the Italian services would be over-zealous. Intrigued by Kurtna's comings and goings, they searched his apartment and discovered a clandestine radio transmitter for communicating with Moscow. What's more, Kurtna, who had just returned from Estonia, did not live alone: although he was dressed as a priest (which he no longer was), he was accompanied by a charming young Russian woman who turned out to be his wife. It goes without saying that his arrest in 1942 upset Kappler's plans. He had him freed when the Germans occupied Rome in the summer of 1943.

Kappler boasted of his successes against the Vatican but did not share his information with the other German intelligence services and diplomats working in Rome. Dissatisfied with the almost empty reports his ambassador was sending in, Joachim von Ribbentrop, the German foreign minister, fell back on a childhood friend, Rudolf Likus, a former champagne seller thrust into the post of coordinator of the embassy's intelligence services. Fascinated by the Vatican, Likus quickly produced very detailed reports seemingly coming from a source in the Secretariat of State. Some of the reports were thought to be sufficiently important to be submitted to Hitler himself. He was astonished to learn in 1941 that Pius XII was enthusiastic about the Germans invading the USSR, and that Portugal was getting ready to open its ports to Allied shipping.

Alas, events didn't substantiate most of Likus's reports: they were merely compilations of rumours and fabrications and certainly not the product of a high-level source. Ordered to react, Ribbentrop decided not to send his friend Likus back, but to create a parallel intelligence service—the Informationstelle (Information Bureau) III. Two agents were hurried to Rome and were put under pressure to provide real information. In March 1943, they were offered the services of a penniless Italian nobleman, called the "Duke": he was friends with several cardinals. For large sums, he provided his benefactors with a flow of information of the first order, like the building of Allied air force bases in Libya or the preparations for landings in Cyprus and Rhodes. When the landings took place in fact in Sicily, it became obvious that the Duke's reports were pure fiction. The

affair finally stripped Ribbentrop’s services of all credibility, making Kappler snigger.

As the course of the war was becoming more and more uncertain, the Nazis wanted to know if Pius XII was going to publicly condemn the massacre of the Jews (already one million victims by the summer of 1942). Kappler was given reinforcements, agents like Helmut Loos, the Vatican specialist of the Amt VI (the foreign spy service within the Sicherheitsdienst), who became his assistant. He dealt with the agents directly recruited by Amt VI, but what they produced was still disappointing. Berlin therefore decided to install a radio transmitter in the Via Tasso HQ.

At the beginning of 1943, the Italian police detected a clandestine radio transmitter and ended up locating it in the palace of Princess Elvina Pallavicini, an anti-fascist who supported the anti-Mussolini resistance. While the city was being bombed for the first time by the Allies, the police invaded the palace. The young woman was warned by her servants and just had time to jump from a window giving on to the rear of the palace. She sought refuge in the Vatican, where she was welcomed by O’Flaherty, who offered her sanctuary in the German College. She remained there until the end of the war and became one of the kingpins of the network, producing false papers and escorting fugitives in Rome from one hideout to another.

In the summer of 1943, a fleeing British soldier sought sanctuary in the Vatican. O’Flaherty took him in and hid him in a building, where he stayed until the end of the war. A few weeks later, in the same way, three further British soldiers were taken in. During the autumn, British soldiers operating in Italy knew that they could find refuge in the Vatican with Hugh O’Flaherty. Every week new soldiers appeared.

This influx did not go unnoticed by Kappler, who was soon informed of the role the Irishman was playing. He was placed under constant surveillance: O’Flaherty could no longer step out into Rome without being tailed. Kappler’s men were instructed to catch him in the act, but the man of the Church was craftier than they were. Kappler started to plan to kidnap or kill him. But he could only be kidnapped outside the Vatican. Should Italy be invaded, Hitler had promised to respect the sovereignty of the Pontifical State.

A plan was hatched: two men were to wait for O’Flaherty at the end of Mass in Saint Peter’s. The Irishman was in the habit of waiting on the steps

of the cathedral to greet the faithful who wanted to speak to him after the service. Two men were instructed to grab him by the arms and drag him into one of the streets near Saint Peter's Square, outside Vatican territory.

O'Flaherty was informed of the dangers threatening him by John May, D'Arcy Osborne's valet. This handsome man had a lot of contacts in the city and had a talent for getting hold of the rarest commodities. He was to become one of the indispensable links between Osborne and O'Flaherty. To him fell the task of finding supplies for the escapers and recruiting the Swiss Guards, who were already won over. On all occasions he was always well turned-out, with a white shirt, grey tie and black suit. May had a source within the Roman Gestapo who told him of the kidnapping plan. His advice to O'Flaherty: lie low for a bit and stay within the walls of the Vatican. Naturally, the Irishman took no notice, even after Rome was occupied.

The American alliance

Did the Pope know about O'Flaherty's activities? It's almost certain he did, but nothing was ever written down. It was Mgr Montini who followed it all and who took any decisions of a practical nature that had to be taken. If things turned out badly, Pius XII could always claim he knew nothing about what had happened. Faced with the failure of his strategy of trying to accommodate Hitler, then negotiating with his opponents, the Pope could only contemplate his helplessness and hope for better days. These could only come from the United States.

And there, on the other side of the Atlantic, Pacelli had an influential agent. His friend Spellman had now acquired a quite different importance: he had the ear of President Roosevelt. We left him at the beginning of the 1930s: meanwhile, he had been appointed assistant bishop in Boston, obliged to work with Cardinal O'Connell, who was still just as unfavourably disposed towards him (as soon as he arrived, O'Connell assigned him to an almost bankrupt, low-prestige parish). But the power game was no longer the same. Spellman put his connections to work for him and developed his high-level contacts. Very soon, American politicians spread the word: Spellman was a voice which counted in Church affairs. The bishop started to rub shoulders with the upper middle class, whose sons and daughters he married. He became friends with Joseph Kennedy, a businessman with wide-ranging interests (banks, real estate, ship

construction and even a film studio—the RKO). In 1934, Joe Kennedy had been appointed the head of the Securities and Exchange Commission (the American stock exchange's policeman) by Roosevelt. According to legend, the president explained to his advisers, who were concerned about the mogul's reputation: "You need a shark to watch over the sharks."

In 1936, Spellman persuaded Secretary of State Pacelli to make a trip to the United States. With the help of Joe Kennedy, Spellman put himself out to make the trip a success and to solidify the Washington–Vatican axis, from both political and financial points of view. Cardinal O'Connell passed away, giving Spellman a marvellous opportunity. Shortly afterwards, Pope Pius XI in turn died and friend Pacelli sat on the throne of Saint Peter. Spellman was then Archbishop of New York, an archdiocese of two million faithful, 400 parishes, and numerous religious schools and hospitals. Counting the religious orders, Spellman had 2 500 priests under his authority. The only shadow on the horizon was that he inherited a colossal debt of some $26 million. But that didn't frighten him.

As they had imposed usurious rates upon his parishes, he brought the banks to heel by threatening them with a Catholic boycott. He was helped by an Irish financier, John Coleman, to invest Vatican and also archbishopric money on the Stock Exchange. Wise choices enabled him to realise good profits. Coleman was thanked with a shower of honorific titles. Spellman was now the person who decided who, among American citizens, could become a knight of the Order of Malta, a knight of Columbus and so on. Millions of dollars in donations passed through his hands every year. He profited from them by maintaining a network of informers in Rome, most of them penniless, keeping him up to date with all the intrigues and current business, in exchange for a few thousand dollars every year. He didn't forget to please his friends and allies with luxurious gifts: gold watches, jewels, tapestries, pianos. Even the Pope's luxurious razor was one of Spellman's gifts. In his archbishop's dining room in New York, Spellman invited to lunch all who counted in the country: diplomats, politicians, generals and even Hollywood actors. He did not forget to tell everyone that he had been invited to the White House for lunch.

In October 1939, Spellman was indeed invited to the White House for the first of many times by President Roosevelt. He was to become the key man in relations between the United States and the Vatican. The apostolic delegate in Washington, Amleto Cicognani, didn't have the ear of Pius XII

as Spellman did. For Roosevelt, the Vatican was a crucial observation post on the rest of Europe. Overcoming the suspicions of non-Catholic opinion, Roosevelt said he was prepared to send a representative to the Vatican: it was the businessman Myron Taylor, a former president of United States Steel. He was accompanied by an assistant, Harold Tittmann, an invalid former World War I pilot who settled permanently in the Vatican City. The main communication channel between the pope and the president was nonetheless still Spellman.

After the United States entered the war, Spellman was appointed chaplain to the United States military forces by the Pope. Roosevelt asked him to carry out a none too Catholic mission: to serve as intermediary with the Italo-American Mafia. The German-American fifth columnists were indeed organising the destruction and torpedoing of numerous American warships. The French transatlantic liner the *Normandie*, converted into a troopship, was even set on fire in Manhattan port on 9 February 1942.

Roosevelt explained that the Germans were winning the Battle of the Atlantic: Nazi U-boats were sinking too many Allied ships, which was threatening to choke the economy and cut off the supply of armaments to Britain. For Roosevelt, only the Mafia could put an end to the information leaks on the ships which were going to sea, starting out from American ports, and to the sabotage in East Coast ports. Frank Costello, one of the Mafia bosses, was a fervent practising Catholic who attended Spellman's services. A little embarrassed, the Archbishop told Roosevelt that he had to ask for the Pope's authorisation for such an unusual step. But Pacelli refused to consider the matter and left Spellman to decide for himself.[17]

A meeting was therefore organised under Spellman's aegis between the commanding officer of the 3rd US Naval Region, Captain Charles Haffenden, and the Mafia boss, Frank Costello. When he arrived, the latter knelt and kissed Spellman's ring, then declared that he was "happy to be useful to his country and his Church". Actually, the order was given by Lucky Luciano himself from prison, where he was serving a fifty-year sentence. In a few weeks, the sabotage of troop transport ships had been stopped and the German-American terrorist networks had suffered huge losses. In 1946, under pressure from the Federal Government, Luciano was freed by the State of New York and expelled to Italy, not without having rendered further services.

Roosevelt then proposed to Spellman to use his role as military chaplain to carry out secret missions in Asia, Africa and Europe: he could meet heads of state and transmit messages from the president without arousing any suspicions. Inasmuch as Spellman could inform the Pope of these contacts, he saw no inconsistency in serving his country and serving his Church. So he started a long international tour, interrupted by frequent stays in the Vatican. It may seem surprising but Italy allowed him to travel as the dignitary of a neutral country (the Vatican) and not as the citizen of an enemy power (the US). The Pope received him in his private apartments, for days on end sometimes. This activism intrigued the Japanese who asked their ambassador to the Holy See, Ken Harada, to find out what Spellman was up to. Strangely enough, the Germans didn't seem to be interested. Obviously nothing was discovered, but it was known that Pius XII, very much worried about the possible destruction caused by the fighting in Italy, pleaded for the American Army to spare the towns and religious monuments as much as possible. Quite plainly, Spellman could not support such a plea, but he pretended to.

Spellman met with Franco in Spain, then with Churchill in London. Roosevelt also asked him to "reason with" General de Gaulle, who was quarrelling with General Giraud, the American favourite, over leadership of the Free French. An American military intelligence report imprudently described the meeting as robust: this had the effect of calming de Gaulle.

Considered as a full-time agent by American intelligence, Spellman was briefed completely before his summit meetings, and full profiles about the people he was going to be talking to were drawn up by the American services. During a visit to Cairo, he was preoccupied by the fate of Italian prisoners of war held in British camps. He met with all the local heads of state: King Farouk in Egypt, the Shah of Iran, Haile Selassie in Ethiopia. He spoke first in the name of the Pope, then in the name of the US president. During his trip to Tehran he met the Russian ambassador, making chancelleries throughout the world speculate about the possibility of a rapprochement between the Kremlin and the Vatican.

Stalin likes Catholics

There was still a long way to go before such a rapprochement took place. After the beginning of Nazi Germany's invasion of the USSR, the Vatican

saw there was an opportunity to send missionaries into occupied territory. Eight priests of the Eastern rite disguised as interpreters for the Italian army left for Russia; this was a small number given the scale of the country.

The two Jesuits, Ciszek and Nestrow, who had been sent to the USSR were arrested and transferred to the Lubyanka prison in Moscow, where they were thought to be Nazi spies, before it was realised that they were in fact Vatican spies. Through Spellman, the Pope asked Roosevelt to encourage his ally Stalin in the direction of greater freedom of religion in the USSR. The “Little Father of the Nations”, who at the time was suffering military setbacks, saw the advantage he could obtain. Repressing religious practices was ostensibly relaxed, even if the Vatican was not taken in. In the summer of 1942, the apostolic delegate in Syria, Rémy-Louis Leprêtre, reported that the Soviets had proposed to the representative of the Free French forces in Moscow, Roger Garreau, to discuss an agreement with the Vatican.

On 28 April 1942, for the first time since d’Herbigny, a Catholic priest arrived in Moscow, and, what was more, he was Polish. Josef Gawlina was the chaplain of the Polish Army: he arrived from London via Tehran with money, a stack of Bibles, altars, crosses and pious pictures. This unusual visit represented a complete turnaround on Stalin’s part towards the Poles after the German invasion: in August 1941, the Polish prime minister in exile, General Sikorski, signed a treaty of alliance with the Soviets in London. The result was that tens of thousands of Polish prisoners were freed from Soviet jails. As for the 1.5 million Poles deported within their own country, they were generously allowed to join the new Polish Army. This enabled General Anders to build up six divisions, regrouping some 100 000 men. Based in Uzbekistan, these divisions were completely independent of the Russians and free to practise their religion. Immediately after this thaw, a hundred or so Polish priests were freed from Soviet camps.

But this turnaround was short-lived. In April 1943, the mass graves of thousands of bodies of Polish officers who had been POWs of the Russians were discovered at Katyn. This created a shock wave in the ranks of the Poles, many of whom understood that the Russians were responsible for the massacre. General Sikorski wanted to believe that his treaty of alliance still held. But some of his troops bore him a grudge for having negotiated it. In the summer of 1943, he died in mysterious circumstances: his plane crashed on a flight over Gibraltar.

To save face after the stampede of Polish troops, the Soviets hastily organised a group of 12 000 Polish soldiers called the “Kosciusko Division” under the command of a Polish colonel who had remained in place. Press correspondents were summoned to take part in a solemn outdoors Mass, officiated by a Polish priest who had been kidnapped in Polish territory and who, flabbergasted, found himself promoted to chaplain-captain of this new army before the cameras of the photographers. The reason for this masquerade was that, despite strong pressure, Father Ciszek, interned in the Lubyanka, had refused emphatically to become chaplain of this Kosciusko Division. Likewise he refused to go to Rome to negotiate a concordat between the Vatican and the Soviet Union.

The closer the Soviet Army got to Polish territory, the more Stalin needed to “neutralise” the hostility of the Vatican. Since Ciszek refused to cooperate, Stalin turned to an even more unlikely candidate. In April 1944, he welcomed with great pomp an American Catholic priest, Father Stanislaw Orlemanski from Springfield, Massachusetts, who had come to study the problems of the Poles in the Soviet Union. Interviewed on Radio Moscow, he declared that he had found “a friend of the Catholic Church” in Stalin.[18] When he returned to the United States, he praised Stalin just as much for having treated him “openly and democratically”. The response to this deluge of goodwill was not what was expected: Orlemanski’s superior suspended this simpleton from his pastoral duties and sent him to do penitence in a monastery.

These incidents were not surprising for those working in the Curia at the time: although Pius XII was ready to make a great effort to win Roosevelt’s good graces, he had trouble going against his own nature where Stalin was concerned.

3

UNDER GERMAN OCCUPATION, 1943–1944

Hitler: Now, Wolff, I've got a special mission for you of world importance and it's a personal affair between you and me. You must never speak of it to anyone without my permission, with the exception of the supreme head of the SS,[1] who knows all about it. Understood?

Wolff: Understood, my Führer.

Hitler: I want you and your troops, while Badoglio's treachery still arouses a strong reaction in Germany, to occupy the Vatican and the Vatican City as soon as possible. You are to seize the archives, the artistic treasures which have a unique value, and you are to take the Pope as well as the Curia for their protection so that they can't fall into the hands of the Allies and exercise any political influence. Depending on the military and political developments, we will decide whether to bring him here to Germany or take him to Liechtenstein, which is neutral.

September 1943: Italy was occupied. Hitler designated General Karl Wolff as commander-in-chief of the SS and the Gestapo in Italy. According to his testimony after the war, he had been summoned by Hitler to his HQ at Rastenburg and had the above conversation.[2] Wolff confirmed that he played for time by arguing that he didn't have enough men and that he needed a month to organise a plan of action. He managed to temporise until

the beginning of December, when Hitler summoned him again. This time he argued that in Italy the Church remained the only organised authority, respected by the population, and that without the support of the clergy, he wouldn't have the means to confront any mass social movement. He would no longer to be able to send reinforcements to Field Marshal Kesselring, nor turn the Italian war effort to the advantage of the Reich, not to mention the possible reaction of the German Catholics. Grumbling, Hitler ended up by abandoning his *idée fixe*.

Pius XII and his entourage were very conscious of the fact that they were at the mercy of the Germans. Things had changed very quickly since the Allied landings in Sicily on 9 July 1943. Marshal Badoglio, the former Chief of Staff of the Italian Army and member of the Fascist Grand Council, had declared he was ready to overthrow Mussolini if he had the support of the King and the Pope. The Pope supported his action. During the night of 24/25 July, the members of the Grand Council voted for Mussolini's removal and asked the King to appoint a successor. The King had Mussolini arrested and appointed Badoglio as the head of state. His plan was to negotiate an armistice with the Allies while still reassuring Hitler.

The Vatican served as an intermediary for these negotiations. They ended with the armistice of 8 September. The response was devastating. On the 11th the Germans took possession of Rome and encircled the Vatican. On the Pope's orders, the most sensitive documents were hidden all over the city, in underground passages, under the paving stones of certain palaces, and God knows where else. Pius XII also left instructions for another conclave to be summoned should he be captured by the Nazis. The Swiss Guard was instructed to offer no resistance, as it would be doomed to failure in case the Germans entered. At the end of 1943, an informer for the Italian secret services reported to the Secretariat of State that there was a rumour that the Vatican was about to be invaded by a troop of SS led by Herbert Kappler.

Hitler's priority was to put Mussolini back in power. He asked his favourite henchman, SS *Obersturmbannführer* Otto Skorzeny, to free him by any means possible. As we have seen, Hitler even envisaged invading the Vatican and kidnapping the Pope. During August, the Nazis suspected—correctly as it happened—that their Italian allies were negotiating their surrender secretly. The threat was such that Secretary of State Maglione

summoned all the cardinals in order to prepare them for the eventual collapse of the Vatican. The most sensitive documents were burned as a precaution. One of Kappler's agents informed him that Mussolini was being held in the Gran Sasso mountains, which allowed a commando operation to be mounted, enabling the Duce to be freed.

As soon as the news came of the Italian surrender, the Germans took control of the city. Tiger tanks were stationed at every crossroad. The Vatican museums and Saint Peter's Basilica were, in an unusual move, closed to the public. The Swiss Guards were issued with guns in place of their halberds. Martial law was decreed by Marshal Kesselring, who warned the Romans that German law now applied. Any act of resistance or of sabotage would be ruthlessly quelled.

Saving the Church's heritage

Apart from the Pope's person, the Vatican in theory had a lot to lose, from a financial point of view, from a German invasion. To avoid a disaster, a financial person had taken exceptional precautions—a very discreet person who played a far from negligible part in our story. To understand his role we have to return to the Lateran Pacts. To manage his new fortune in 1929, the Pope needed a trustworthy person. He found him in the person of Bernardino Nogara, a well-known banker in Italy. His main asset was the fact that he had started off as the right-hand man of a Venetian financier, Count Giuseppe Volpi (Mussolini's future minister of finance), who sent him to the four corners of his empire: he was thus a manager of mines in Bulgaria, as well as the head of a financial agency in Constantinople, where he ran a network of informers which enabled Volpi to keep an eye on all business opportunities. After World War I, Nogara was part of the delegation of Italian experts at the Versailles Peace Conference and represented Italy at the Inter-Allied Commission, supervising Germany's reconstruction. Four of his brothers had taken Holy Orders, two had become archbishops, and a third ran the Vatican Museum.

That being said, Nogara was very suitable according to the requirements of the moment. In 1929, Pius XI created the Special Administration of the Holy See (ASSS) and appointed Nogara at its head, with full authority to manage the endowments received as a result of the Lateran Pacts. Nogara undertook to diversify the Vatican's investments by moving the funds in the

Banco di Roma to other banks and by investing in the railways and industries of other European countries like France and Germany. From October 1929, he was confronted with the great world crisis starting with the Wall Street Crash. In 1933, the Vatican admitted it had lost more than 100 million lire. Its annual income was seriously reduced. Nogara decided to turn part of the Holy See's assets into gold (entrusted to the Morgan Bank in New York) and to invest in real estate and various countries' treasury bonds, working through a Luxembourg holding company and giving them absolute discretion. As a director of the Franco-Italian bank Sudameris, established in South America, Nogara undertook to diversify its banking channels, notably with the Union des Banques Suisses (UBS). Nogara became a prominent person among the Italian political and economic elites, the equal of Alberto Pirelli or Giovanni Agnelli. In the end, he managed to stabilise and protect the endowments of the Vatican during the crisis.[3]

During the war, his good relations with big American financiers benefited the Vatican. Thanks partly to Nogara and partly to Spellman, the Holy See was the only European state able to carry out transactions with both the Allied and the Axis powers. Indeed, as soon as America entered the war, the president signed an executive order blocking all transactions with the Axis countries and those placed under their control. Italy was obviously part of this. European countries like Switzerland and Andorra which had proclaimed their neutrality were also involved. In short, all Europe was involved—except the tiny Vatican city-state, which was nonetheless at the mercy of Mussolini.

The White House did not want to alienate American Catholics and, above all, Roosevelt remembered that in 1936 he had been visited by Secretary of State Pacelli, who was shown around by Spellman: Catholic voters were seen as having political clout and they voted for the most part for the Democratic Party in 1940.

The British were less accommodating of the Pope's financier. Their Ministry of Economic Warfare suspected Nogara of playing a double game. After all, ever since 1925, he had been a director of the biggest Italian bank, BCI, which was considered an enemy entity. The same applied to its subsidiary, the Banca della Svizzera Italiana, which was put on the blacklist because of its dealings with Nazi companies. Finally he held an interest in Sudameris, which was also on the blacklist for its Nazi connections. In short, the Allies had every cause to impose sanctions on the Vatican, instead

of which they were happy just to protest to Secretary of State Maglione, who in turn assured them of the Holy See's neutrality.

Some responsible American and British people wondered if Nogara wasn't playing a double game: was the Vatican really the owner of the considerable stocks of shares and bonds that Nogara deposited with J.P. Morgan in New York? It was suspected, but it could not be proven, that he was laundering these shares for money that made its way into the accounts of their real owners, wanting to smuggle out some of their assets. But how does one investigate the Church?

In June 1942, the Vatican went a step further in its quest for financial secrecy: it created its own bank, the IOR (the Istituto per le Opere di Religione, or Institute for Religious Works), which did not submit to any foreign regulations, paid no taxes to anybody, and did not publish any accounts. Until 2000, it was even authorised to destroy its records regularly. This institution was completely independent inside the Church (it will be discussed again later). It enabled Nogara's transactions to disappear from the international radar. The bank could receive shares and money: in principle, it only accepted priests, religious orders and other charitable institutions as customers. But in practice, it soon became the preserve of rich Italians and others, worried about looking after their capital. Nogara was soon staggering under the requests made to him and discovered a new business model for his bank, an unexpected source of income. Easy money? Certainly. On the moral side, it left a lot to be desired.

The bank was used as cover for international speculation: clergymen close to the Pope were sent as couriers to get across the borders with large sums of money in cash and securities. Spellman himself played a key role: during his military trips, the archbishop never travelled without suitcases containing gold, shares and bonds in safe custody, as well as foreign currency in cash, worth several million dollars each time. Armed with American safe conducts, he was never worried. Dozens of trustworthy priests organised more modest flows, notably towards Switzerland. In all, several hundred millions of dollars were put away safely in this way.

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the American secret service created in 1942, became interested in the IOR's activities. In 1944, its agents discovered that the Reichsbank had transferred funds on several occasions to the Vatican via a Swiss bank.[4] The information was explosive,

but no follow-up was ever made. The United States had a war to finish. After the war, the context changed.

So who was Nogara working for? To understand this, one has to go back to the relationship with his mentor, his first boss, Count Volpi, in whom the American intelligence services were very interested during the war. He was described as a totally unscrupulous man, with considerable power in European finance. It was Volpi who intrigued to get Nogara on to the board of the BCI. Volpi was one of the negotiators of the Lateran Pacts.

Volpi had supported his protégé's candidature for managing the Holy See's patrimony. In return, Nogara got the Vatican involved in Volpi's affairs in the Balkans and in Italy. Both men invested together in the insurance company Generali. There was nothing unusual with this, on the face of it. Apart from the fact that it had 80 international subsidiaries, Generali quickly became suspect in American eyes: on the basis of several alerts from American bankers and insurers, they believed the company didn't only sell insurance; it also housed a vast information network for the Axis powers. The reports noted that some files were sent by local Generali agents in America to Italy by a rather unusual manner: the Vatican's diplomatic bag.

From 1942 on, American intelligence kept an eye on Generali's activities in Central and South America. In Mexico, the insurance company America Latina was identified as a cover for Axis spies. It invested some of its capital in the Mexican bank Banamex, which held this participation on behalf of Generali. The investigators wondered whether the IOR was implicated, since it traded financially with Banamex regularly, but they were unable to inquire any further.

After the war, the Vatican's investment in Generali turned out to be more than embarrassing. It was learnt in fact that Generali had profited from the Shoah in a most scandalous way. The life assurance contracts subscribed by Jewish customers had quite simply been pilfered and nothing had been done to hand over the money to the victims' heirs. All the records had been destroyed. In Germany, the insurance company Allianz profited from this criminal godsend on an even more massive scale.

Count Volpi's fate was tragic, despite his flourishing business and his relationships. On 23 September 1943, SS *Obersturmbannführer* Herbert Kappler, the head of the Nazi security forces in Rome, arrested the count and accused him of being a Jewish agent. Why? Volpi had intervened with

Mussolini to protect a Jewish manager of Generali. Despite the Vatican's appeal on his behalf, Volpi spent several months in prison before being allowed to go into exile in Switzerland, where he was hospitalised for nervous depression. He died in 1947 from a heart attack. It is surprising that such a valuable man for the Italian economy and certain intelligence networks was sacrificed in this way: maybe he'd played the game too personally—unless he was eclipsed by somebody else.

The collaboration between financiers and spies during World War II has not yet yielded all its secrets. One neglected example gives a good idea of the dangerous games that some opportunistic financiers played. Based in Switzerland, the Banque de Règlements Internationaux (BRI, or, in English, the BIS, the Bank for International Settlements) was created in 1931 by a consortium of eight countries as a sort of clearing house for the European central banks. In principle it was autonomous and was responsible to nobody. But from 1940 onwards it was influenced by the Reichsbank, i.e. the Nazis. It took part in a programme of buying back gold stolen from the deportees to the concentration camps or pillaged from occupied countries. The heads of the BIS showed their complete cynicism by also speculating against the Reichsmark.

The American researcher Charles Higham[5] has mentioned the interrogation of Heinrich Otto Abetz (probably the former German ambassador to France) by American military intelligence. He revealed that the Vatican intelligence services had supplied—no doubt via Nogara—important information regarding the projected landings in North Africa to the BIS. Thanks to this information, the BIS had speculated massively against the Reichsbank, making a colossal profit, part of which it paid back to the IOR as reward for this "golden tip". While finance serves espionage, espionage can also serve finance.

Behind this collaboration between the IOR and the BIS appeared the shadow of an American spy, the business lawyer Allen Dulles, who had become the European delegate for the OSS in Berne. From his Swiss HQ, he developed a network which had tentacles everywhere, even among the enemy: within the Reichsbank, he had recruited a manager as an agent: Hans Gisevius. After the war, the American Treasury accused Gisevius of laundering German and Hungarian money in Switzerland with Dulles's help, but the affair was hushed up.[6]

It is difficult to consider Nogara as a simple financier who played only a technical role during the war. The more one digs, the more unexpected facts come to light. A 1945 OSS report, mentioned for the first time by Gerald Posner,[7] informs us that Nogara had probably been recruited by the Nazi secret services. Posner bases this on the testimony of an Abwehr agent, Reinhard Karl Wilhelm Reme, who operated during war under the cover of an insurance agent and served from 1943 as a recruiting agent for the Milan region. A few months later, the Abwehr was disbanded and its agents transferred to the Sicherheitsdienst's Amt VI, headed by Walter Schellenberg.

It is likely that Nogara, if we are talking about Bernardino Nogara,[8] had been recruited *before* the war. This was perhaps at the time he was working in Constantinople for Volpi: the Abwehr was then very active. If Nogara had indeed been recruited before even entering the service of the Vatican, this would mean that the German services had indeed pulled off a masterstroke by succeeding in placing one of their agents in the heart of the Vatican machine. One has to put into perspective the influence that he might have had on Pius XII's attitude towards Nazi Germany: the Pope was his own expert and was not the sort of man to let himself be influenced easily. Of course, Nogara might have transmitted some information on various diplomatic negotiations he heard about without it all going very far. The Secretariat of State had never been inclined to divulge its secrets to those who didn't have to know them, even if they were honourable servants of the Vatican. On the other hand, it becomes easier to understand how the IOR, the BIS, the Reichsbank and the Abwehr's networks were harnessed together.

Doubtless, it wasn't money that was the main reason why Nogara allowed himself to be recruited: it was no doubt ideology and the wish to be at the heart of European affairs. Because of this central position between finance and espionage, between the Axis and the Allied powers, Nogara became indispensable, until he eclipsed his mentor, Volpi.

Gold for saving the Italian Jews

Pursuit of the Jews started as soon as the North of Italy was occupied by the Germans. At the end of September, representatives from the Roman Jewish

community were summoned by the Gestapo chief, Herbert Kappler: he demanded that 50 kg of gold be delivered to him within 36 hours to prevent him from arresting and deporting the Jews. The Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, said that he could never amass such an amount with only the community's donations. He sought out Nogara, who agreed to find the gold after having taken instructions from Secretary of State Maglione. When asked, the Pope declared he was in favour of a loan and even suggested melting down gold vases to make up the amount. In the end, 15 kg of gold still outstanding was supplied by Catholic congregations. The gold thus collected was sent to Berlin. But this was only a brief respite.

Informed of this, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, head of the Reich Security Main Office, ordered Kappler nonetheless to carry out the orders. Irritated by Kappler's dragging his feet, Berlin sent a detachment of Waffen SS led by Captain Theodor Dannecker at the beginning of October to take things in hand. With his men, Dannecker arranged the arrest and deportation of Rome's Jews, which took place on the night of 15/16 October. The haul totalled 1 259 victims (out of a community of some 8 000 Jews), who were deported to Auschwitz. Maglione, the Secretary of State, summoned Ernst von Weizsäcker, the German ambassador, to protest against these round-ups. The latter answered very diplomatically that an official protest was likely to irritate Hitler, with results that might lead no one knew where. Once again Pius XII chose to keep a low profile.

On the other hand, the Vatican ordered all religious houses in Rome to open their doors and take in any Jewish refugees who turned up. In all 6 000 people were put up in a hundred or so houses for nuns and 45 monasteries. Some found refuge in the Vatican itself and in its buildings. This caused great organisational problems.

Mgr O'Flaherty had expanded the range of his work. In October 1943, almost a thousand Allied soldiers had been hidden in houses and apartments in Rome or placed on nearby farms. O'Flaherty and his right-hand man, John May (the British ambassador's valet), could no longer manage such an enterprise alone. They had to recruit host families, raise funds, supply clothes and food for the various safe houses. Consequently, the two men recruited a diplomat from the Swiss Legation, Count Sarsfield Salazar. He had been employed for a while in the American Embassy before working for the Swiss. The trio shared the work. O'Flaherty devoted himself to looking for premises, going backwards and forwards across Rome.

Ambassador Osborne was given the task of asking London for funds. To make the transfers easier, the Foreign Office negotiated a loan with the Vatican Bank of 3 million lire. The American government agreed in turn to send funds via its chargé d'affaires, Tittmann. O'Flaherty also received a helping hand from rich anti-fascist Romans, like Prince Pamphili, who, barely out of prison, returned to his Roman palace and undertook to finance his old friend's network.

One of the unexpected spin-offs of the round-up was to increase the support for O'Flaherty's organisation among the Roman population, which until then had remained indifferent to the Germans. Moreover, the Vatican, forced to remain silent officially, found his initiative more and more judicious. The organisation was to take in Jews as well as British soldiers.

Prince Pamphili's palace was placed under close surveillance by Kappler. An opportunity to hit him hard presented itself when O'Flaherty paid him a visit to collect a new donation. Outside the Vatican, O'Flaherty was vulnerable and could be easily arrested. Fortunately the prince's secretary spotted the policemen on duty in front of the palace and went to warn his master just as there was knocking at the door. O'Flaherty just had time to rush to the cellar. Coincidentally, at that very moment there was a delivery of coal. The monsignor, suddenly inspired, removed his cassock, covered his face and shirt with coal dust, and joined the workers unloading the truck in the courtyard, introducing himself to them quietly. At that moment, it would have been very easy for them to denounce him. But they agreed to play game. O'Flaherty seized a sack, which he put on his back, and crossed the courtyard, passing in front of two SS soldiers on guard. It was a close-run thing.

This time, O'Flaherty understood that he could no longer walk about Rome as he used to. Until the end of the war, he never went further than the steps of Saint Peter's and communicated with the prince by coded messages transmitted by priests and nuns. A few months later, O'Flaherty was warned of a raid on his friend's palace and had false identity papers taken by a priest for him, his wife and their daughter. They disappeared at once.

In November 1943, Major Sam Derry of the Royal Artillery arrived in Rome; he'd escaped from a camp. During his wanderings around the Italian countryside, he had gathered around him fifty or so soldiers, hidden in the countryside. With the help of a local priest, he had been able to get a message through to the Vatican. O'Flaherty and Osborne decided to send

them money at first; Derry was brought to the Vatican and questioned by Osborne, who judged him to be credible and had the Foreign Office check him over. As it happened, the network needed a military chief: Osborne proposed the post to Derry, who accepted.

At the end of 1943, the net was tightening around the O'Flaherty organisation. Several of his sites had been spotted and put under surveillance. During a social function one evening, he was warned by the German ambassador himself, who took him aside and told him that his organisation had been "in place for too long a time and must stop". And he added: "If you leave the Vatican, you'll be arrested on sight. It's your last warning." A few hours later, O'Flaherty was summoned by the Under-Secretary of State, Montini, who was very much in the know. He repeated the warning from the German ambassador. Immediately afterwards, he learnt that Major Derry's cover had been blown. The latter lived in the German College and had to pack his bags and seek refuge in Osborne's quarters.

Infiltrating the Vatican

Obsessed by O'Flaherty, Kappler had nonetheless not forgotten his primary mission: to succeed in infiltrating the Vatican. He continued to pull the strings of complex operations launched before the German occupation. One of the most outlandish was to create a fake college inside the Vatican.

In February 1941, a rich, pious Georgian widow died in Brussels, having decided to leave a part of her fortune to a relatively obscure Benedictine order created in the 19th century to support the Catholic minority in Georgia. Father Michael Tarchnisvili, who was in charge of the legacy, planned to use it to set up a Georgian college in Rome. But to do so, he had to find additional funds. On the advice of the leader of a Georgian émigrés' association in Germany, Father Tarchnisvili contacted a "friend" in Rome who could help him organise such an appeal: his name was Herbert Kappler.

At first sceptical, the Reich Security Main Office heads persuaded themselves that the operation would enable them to obtain a foothold inside the Vatican. As Alvarez and Graham have remarked, it is very surprising that they didn't find it simpler to use the German church of Santa Maria dell'Anima, whose rector, Bishop Alois Hudal, was a convinced Nazi.

Perhaps that was because he frequented the German Embassy openly and was, as far as everybody was concerned, a German informer.

Kappler's team easily manipulated the naive Father Tarchnisvili and soon told him that they'd found a generous benefactor, who wanted of course to remain anonymous. The Reich Security Main Office would therefore contribute its own share to the Georgian seminary, in fake pounds sterling. The service had in fact set up a counterfeit workshop in Sachsenhausen concentration camp, comprising 142 prisoners, most of them Jews, some selected because of their printers' know-how, like Adolf Burger.[9] This lucrative activity enabled them to finance several secret operations and also to enrich several intermediaries by buying currency on the black market.

The affair seemed to be settled, no doubt too quickly. Kappler's team erred by its lack of subtlety: the priest resisted when he was told that the seminary had to house a clandestine radio transmitter and that there would be no funding if he persisted in his refusal. Tarchnisvili sought advice from a Georgian friend, Basilius Sadathieraschvili, a press correspondent in Rome. The latter, being destitute, scented a good opportunity and proposed to intervene on behalf of Father Tarchnisvili. He turned up at Kappler's and suggested cynically that he'd "run" the operation instead of the priest. The priest would remain the nominal head but would only deal with religious questions, whereas he would administer all the rest and would have two rooms to which nobody except himself would have access.

This was the team that went ahead with the purchase of a property registered in the name of the Vatican in December 1943. Pope Pius XII had given his apostolic blessing to the project and to its mysterious benefactor, i.e. the Reich Security Main Office. Father Tarchnisvili was no doubt not taken in, but he kept mum. In mid-February 1944, Basilius went to Berlin and came back with a group of six young Georgians. Cardinal Tisserant, the head of the Congregation for the Eastern Church, on which the Georgian seminary depended, found them a bit strange and advised Father Tarchnisvili to have them submit to individual interviews.

Three of them were dismissed immediately, while the other three, installed temporarily in the Russicum, gave up after a few weeks. They were soldiers from the Georgian Legion whom the Reich Security Main Office had sent on a short intelligence course but who had neither the

experience nor the required training for this type of activity. Alerted by this, Tarchnisvili discovered where the radio transmitter was installed and had it out with Basilius, who increasingly appeared to be a German spy; he fled a few days before the Allies arrived in Rome. Father Tarchnisvili was investigated after the Liberation, but the conclusion was that he was innocent.

Finally the only real trump card that Kappler held for finding out what was going on inside the Vatican remained the enigmatic double (or triple) agent, Kurtna. In September 1943, he had him taken from his cell. Kurtna resumed his work in the Congregation as if nothing had happened. In December 1943, Berlin was fed up with the few results obtained and sent Georg Elling, an SS officer, to Rome. He was a former Benedictine monk, an ex-Sicherheitsdienst agent operating under the cover of a cultural attaché (he was in fact attached to Kappler's service). He met Kurtna. As the Allies were progressing with their conquest of Italy, Schellenberg told Elling to set up a network destined to remain behind in Rome in case of a German defeat. Without saying anything, Schellenberg thought that this team might be useful if it was necessary to secure the Pope's mediation. Elling built up his network by recruiting Kurtna (which irritated Kappler), and several other German and Italian priests living in Rome joined it. Kurtna did as much as possible to satisfy both Kappler and Elling as well as his Russian backers. While he was at it, seeing the inexorable advance of the American Army, he started informing his bosses in the Vatican about the Gestapo. According to Alvarez and Graham, he informed Mgr Antonio Arata, Tisserant's right-hand man, that the Gestapo knew about the British and American soldiers' hideout in the Vatican.[10]

In the panic caused by the Germans evacuating Rome, Kurtna succeeded in obtaining a copy of the Gestapo code book and the list of its agents and radio operators. The day the Americans entered Rome, he handed over an envelope containing these documents to a contact in the Secretariat of State, asking him to pass them on to the Soviets.

He was arrested by the same Italian services that had arrested him in 1942, then freed at the request of the Soviets and sent to Moscow. Like a lot of other Russian spies, Kurtna was barely rewarded for his services. Once again Stalin's paranoia turned against his most devoted agents: in 1948, an American Jesuit priest held in a forced labour camp recognised Kurtna, then working as a simple administrative agent. Kurtna was the man who had

supplied very solid information, but that was still quite insufficient for Stalin.

Round-ups at the Vatican

Before the German takeover of Italy, Kappler's team numbered all in all two officers. At the beginning of 1944, he was at the head of 74 agents. The building in the Via Tasso remained active 24/7; there they interrogated and tortured without let-up. Rome was now subjected to a curfew. For flushing out the Jews, the Gestapo used a special unit of the Italian police, the "Koch Gang". Kappler's agents and the Koch Gang carried out raids on three buildings belonging to the Vatican, which were, in theory, out of bounds. In the Pontifical Oriental Institute, some refugees had time to escape, but in the round-up eighteen people were arrested, mainly Jews and resistance workers. Kappler was now persuaded that O'Flaherty was the head of a vast British network, run by D'Arcy Osborne.

On the evening of 3 February 1944, at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls, two monks turned up and asked to be allowed in. Once the door was opened, soldiers broke in and neutralised the guards. A hundred or so Italian policemen and two Nazi officers entered the building, where monks and visitors were sleeping. They searched everywhere and herded together the occupants. They were looking for a deserting general of the Italian army, Adriano Monti, hidden among the priests. He was arrested wearing the robes of a monk. On the same occasion, several dozen Jews were arrested. Very quickly the Curia was convinced there had been treachery. In order to dare to violate the Vatican's sovereignty, the attackers had to be certain of what they were going to find. It was discovered later that in fact an old dissident, having been arrested and tortured, had agreed to collaborate with the Italian services to save his skin. Anyway, this man was reduced to lay status and was expelled from the Vatican on Pius XII's instruction. This episode revealed how fragile the Vatican's status was—all the more so as further raids were planned on various properties. Fortunately for the Vatican, a Fascist in authority warned the Curia, which had time to do what was necessary to hide its guests.

O'Flaherty's organisation was getting worried: it was now hiding 2 000 prisoners on 40 sites throughout Rome. The financial needs continued to increase. Registers had also to be kept to justify the use of the money, but

this amounted to leaving very compromising traces, which was why the accounts were hidden in biscuits boxes buried in the Vatican gardens.

The network was at the mercy of betrayal: it was only a question of time before this happened. A new refugee arrived, a Czech Jew, a medical student whom the British officer Derry, recruited to run the network, had known in the camp at Chieti. Derry had doubts about him but nonetheless brought him into the network. This turned out to be fatal: when visiting a colleague, he fell into the hands of the Gestapo and gave the address of an apartment. Kappler sent agents who pretended to be resistance fighters and were welcomed with open arms and even invited to sit down and eat. A short while later, they returned, this time with SS soldiers, who rounded everybody up. One of the Italians arrested, whose job was to cook, was frightened and spoke before even being touched. He gave the addresses of two other apartments. Another round-up followed. An officer who had gone out for a walk just missed being caught. Having realised what was happening, he ran to seek refuge in the Vatican.

O'Flaherty sent priests to check on the other hideouts. All the sites that were too well known, in particular those known to the people who'd been arrested, had to be abandoned. The network was reorganised into independent cells whose members didn't know each other. At the end of January 1944, Kappler had at last succeeded in throwing the network into confusion. But the Allies were advancing to the south of Rome: the battle for the capital was about to begin.

In February Kappler gave the go-ahead for the extraterritorial properties of the Vatican to be searched. The police, under their new boss, Caruso, with the help of the Koch group, searched the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls and captured more Jews, who were deported to Auschwitz. The Vatican protested officially, but this time gave instructions for all lay people to be expelled from its buildings. There was a lot of profound heart-searching on the part of those who wanted to obey orders and those who feared they might send refugees to their deaths.

On 18 March, Kappler managed to recruit a volunteer from the organisation, Grossi. He met O'Flaherty and told him of a dozen or so escapees hiding in the countryside near Rome. One of them was ill and had to be cared for urgently. Kappler was hoping to get O'Flaherty out of Rome. But the priest was warned in time about the manoeuvre.

In the spring of 1944, the masks finally came off. Kappler put a price on O'Flaherty's head, promising a big reward for whoever was responsible for his arrest. Despite the evacuation of the convents, there were still 3 500 refugees hiding in Rome. Apart from British men, there were now Americans, Russians and even Greeks. Ambassador Osborne constantly obtained new finances, which were moved via the bank accounts of the Jesuit order, whereas other funds were transferred from Switzerland. But soon the Swiss Legation was frightened off after it was warned by the German ambassador, Weizsäcker, and stopped collaborating.

John May, Ambassador Osborne's resourceful valet, found a source that had access to the offices of the Fascist police and the SS. He insisted that he could get hold of sensitive documents for 1 000 lire per delivery. The first batch turned out to be very useful. A copy of the daily police orders was obtained in this way. From then on, the heads of the network knew in advance which lodgings were about to be searched. Every day a copy of the new orders arrived at lunchtime, which gave them until evening to organise themselves.

Priests were mobilised to warn the threatened guests. But because of the fruitless searches, Kappler ended up realising that there was a leak. To counter this, he had to infiltrate the group of messenger priests. One of the oldest members of the network was an Italian called Pasquale Perfetti. Captured by Kappler's men, he revealed after a few days of torture all that he knew, which was a lot. Once released, he wandered the streets of Rome in the company of Gestapo agents. In a panic Derry and O'Flaherty had to evacuate all the lodgings known to Perfetti, but they still couldn't prevent thirty or so people from being arrested.

In April, the network received more reinforcements. The Ardeatine Caves Massacre (more than 300 civilians were executed in a reprisal for a terrorist attack) outraged the Romans and supplied new recruits. All the more so as the authorities decided to ration the supply of bread. On Easter Monday, three Germans were killed by the Resistance. Kappler had the Quadraro quarter in Rome cordoned off and searched with a fine toothcomb. This quarter included many network hideouts. It was a disaster: 2 000 people were arrested of whom 750 were deported. The next day, another raid led to the arrest of an important member of the network, Lieutenant Bill Simpson, and an American officer. It was clear that the network was no longer able to look after new refugees securely. It was

decided to give those who turned up some money and advise them to hide in the countryside. The refugees that remained were ordered from then onwards not to walk outside in Rome, and only a handful of messenger priests could visit the lodgings.

On 1 May 1944, two SS were following a monk in the streets of Rome. This was a Dutch Augustinian monk, Anselmus Musters (code name Dutchpa), a member of the network. Musters realised he was being followed and hurried to get to the shelter of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major. Having reached the steps of the building, he was seized and threatened with a revolver. He fought and managed to seek refuge inside the basilica. Guards barred entry to the pursuers. A quarter of an hour later, SS agents burst in. Musters was arrested and taken to the Gestapo HQ in Rome. His interrogators put a chart of the network under his nose: it was frightfully accurate. It revealed how much progress the Gestapo had made in developing its knowledge of the network. After 35 days' detention, Musters was deported. While the train stopped in Florence, the prisoners were allowed out. He took advantage of this and, by a miracle, managed to escape. He found refuge in a neighbouring monastery where he was cared for.

The Americans arrive

As the Liberation approached, Rome seemed to be teeming with secret agents: secret discussions took place in all directions. Branko Bokun, the young Yugoslav who had tried in vain to mobilise the Vatican against the Nazi atrocities in Croatia, had resigned himself to doing what he could in his job for the Red Cross. Every day, not without irony, he observed the little intelligence world: "On the French side there were four groups of spies: the anti-de Gaulle, the anti-Germans, the anti-Pétain and the anti-Allies. All were easy prey for the Italian agents who, reduced to partial unemployment by the capitulation, invented intelligence and sold it to the French. To do this, all they had to do was to threaten one of the four groups with selling the so-called intelligence to the others." It was even nastier with the Soviets: "In Rome you'd still come across Russian agents, recognisable easily by the fact that they always went around in pairs. One half of the espionage world made fun of them. If they go around in pairs, they claimed, it was because one of them knew how to read and the other

how to write. The second half affirmed that one was deaf and the other mute—the Russian secret services were prudent in this way. Soviet spies found themselves often confronted with a sizeable problem: they simply didn't understand why the Italian communists went to Mass every Sunday. One day, a Russian asked one of them the reasons for this practice. The Italian answered that he went to church in order to pray for Stalin and for the victory of the communists."

The Vatican's networks are described in this way: "Naturally, one cannot forget the spies in Vatican pay where each office, each congregation had its own agents—in this, the Jesuits were the strongest of all. But in the end, all of them worked for the Pope. The Holy See's spies were chosen from all milieus: there were members of the Roman aristocracy and peasants, bank managers, and Italians employed by the Germans and Italians employed by the Allies, honest people and black market traffickers."[11]

Faced with the Allies' advance on Rome, the Germans knew that a number of Italian spies had been given the task of estimating the number of men and the amount of military equipment which was going to be sent to fight the Anglo-Americans at Anzio. That was why the two German divisions were instructed to march twice down the Via Flaminia and the Corso to mislead informers about the size of the real forces present.

A good number of Italian spies were driven only by the promise of gain. They offered their services to the highest bidder. When a representative of the American OSS set himself up in Rome in January 1944, there was a rush to take advantage of his supposed largesse. Between them, these opportunists rechristened the OSS the "Opera Sistemazione Squadrinati"—the Service of Charity to the Indigents. The OSS had been formed by William Donovan, a close friend of Roosevelt, soon after the United States entered the war. Donovan was free to recruit young brilliant graduates from the big universities.

The first OSS recruits, about sixty of them, were trained initially in Maryland to military level, then by the British M6, who housed them in Bletchley Park, north of London, for training in espionage techniques. The British looked upon these young people condescendingly. However, some of them would form the future kernel of the CIA and become the leaders of Western espionage during the Cold War. Establishing himself in Berne,

Allen Dulles (the future boss of the CIA) started throwing his net out in all directions without having to worry too much about his budget, which was unlimited. There were a lot of useless informers, but among the dross one ended up obviously by finding some nuggets. Dulles entered into contact with Müller, the anti-Nazi military conspirators' lawyer. Even if the watchword for the Allies was now unconditional surrender (which rendered any attempt at papal mediation useless), Dulles and his boss Donovan were very interested in the prospects that Müller revealed to them of mediation with the internal opposition to Hitler from within the army. Unfortunately Müller was arrested shortly afterwards.

In August 1944, after Count Stauffenberg's failed *coup d'état*, the plotting German officers fell one after the other into the vast net that the Reich had thrown over those suspected of treason. One arrest warrant was issued for Father Rösch, the coordinator of the Committee of the Orders, the German Catholic network, who hid himself in the Bavarian countryside but ended by being captured. The priests of the Committee of the Orders were pursued. In an Abwehr annexe, the SS discovered a trunk filled with proof of the role of the Vatican in anti-Hitler plots, including the personal diaries of Canaris. Müller was transferred to the camp at Flossenbürg where Canaris's conspirators were gathered. Rattenhüber, commanding Hitler's bodyguards, pleaded with Kaltenbrunner not to execute Müller: he could be used as a go-between with Pius XII to negotiate a separate peace.[12]

* * *

Dulles's first real prize recruit was another German. In the summer of 1943, a civil servant from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs called Fritz Kolbe offered his services. Given the job of carrying the German diplomatic bag to Berne, he was able to transmit to Dulles copies of cables sent by the German embassies as well as reports from Baron von Weizsäcker, the German ambassador to the Holy See.

Dulles was not the first person in the OSS to be interested in the Vatican very early on. The service's chief head, William Donovan, developed a strong interest in this subject from the beginning. Cardinal Spellman showed himself to be a zealous collaborator, paid him frequent visits, explaining the mysteries of the Holy See and supplying a copy of reports from the Secretariat of State on the countries where the OSS had no

sources. In February 1942, Philip Rodgers, a young left-wing Catholic, offered to distribute pro-American propaganda in Latin America and in Europe in “left-wing Catholic” networks, on behalf of Donovan.

In the summer of 1942, Donovan was interested in the links between Rodgers and a Catholic information agency called Pro Deo,[13] which had the tacit support of the Vatican. It had existed since the 1930s. After 1933, the Amsterdam and Brussels offices, and their members in Germany, had become important sources of information about the Nazi persecution of Catholics. The invasion of Belgium in May 1940 forced the manager of the Brussels office, Félix Morlión, a Dominican priest, to leave for Paris, then Lisbon, where he opened a new office. In the summer of 1941, under pressure from the German services, the Portuguese firmly ordered him to quit Portugal: he went into exile in New York.

With a Catholic journalist, Anna Brady, he founded a new press agency, the CIP (the Catholic International Press), which was to open offices in London and regain a foothold in Lisbon. The FBI carried out an investigation on Morlión, considering him anti-fascist and anti-communist.[14] After the CIP was created, Morlión entered into contact with Rodgers. The latter asked a representative of the British Ministry of Information to help them distribute information more favourable to Great Britain among American Catholics, many of whom were of Irish decent. Rodgers then put him in touch with Donovan.

* * *

After Monte Cassino, American troops marched on Rome. Pietro Koch, the leader of the Italian Koch Gang, a German auxiliary group, contacted O’Flaherty to offer him a deal: asylum for his mother and his wife in a convent, in exchange for which no prisoners would be deported anymore. O’Flaherty made it a condition that two British officers be handed over. At the beginning of June, the Germans were getting ready to leave. Just after the Americans entered Rome, the Normandy landings began.

It is known nowadays that Mgr Montini played an important role in the survival of the O’Flaherty network. Very close to Ambassador D’Arcy Osborne, he was kept informed of all the details of the operation. It was he who warned O’Flaherty when the German pressure was becoming too

dangerous. There is no indication that the Curia tried to stop O'Flaherty's activities, despite the German raids on its properties and the arrests of priests. It would have irritated the British, who, to any sensible observer, appeared to be more and more likely to win the war.

To what extent did Montini keep Pius XII informed of the details of what was going on? It is certain that his heart leant towards the Allies, perhaps even more than one is led to believe. MI6 archives conceal a little bombshell about him which colours how we read the whole business: according to the historian Steven Dorril, Ambassador Osborne's assistant, Hugh Montgomery, a "devout" Catholic, had been "Montini's lover".[15] The information is impossible to verify, so it must be taken provisionally.

In truth, the intelligence service archives often include some notes about the private life of agents and bosses with whom they were in contact. Until recently, researchers modestly avoided putting these details forward, not knowing how to treat them: rumours, information? Not to mention the embarrassment of referring to a sexual preference and the risk of being branded a homophobe. Today the taboo of homosexuality in the Church has been partly lifted. The historian must not conceal or exaggerate these open-ended questions but incorporate them into his research by applying the same critical method as he or she does to any archive; one cannot study the history of the Vatican from an intelligence point of view without disclosing what can turn out to be a source of vulnerability. In this particular case, if the theory of a "special friendship" between Montini and Osborne's assistant were confirmed, this could explain why there was a more emotional engagement than was the rule in the Curia in favour of the Allied cause. It would imply also that the British secret services had, for the duration of the war, an implicit means of applying pressure on the future Paul VI.

4

ROME

OPEN CITY, 1944–1947

The Allies entered Rome on 4 June 1944. At the time 477 Jews were still hiding in the Vatican City, to which must be added 4 238 hidden in Roman monasteries and convents. In all, the SS arrested and deported about a thousand Jews.

When the Americans arrived, Pius XII wanted Spellman by his side to serve as go-between with the army officers and to help him redirect Vatican diplomacy. After Paris was liberated on 25 August 1944, General de Gaulle embarrassed the Pope by demanding that all cardinals who had collaborated with the Germans must be dismissed, starting with Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard in Paris, who had totally compromised himself with the occupier. The Pope sent Spellman to negotiate with de Gaulle, but to no avail. Both men just didn't get on. Forced to replace the apostolic delegate Valeri, the Pope believed he could show his contempt by choosing a person thought to be minor, the nuncio in Turkey, Angelo Roncalli. Spellman had met him during his Middle Eastern tour: the two men couldn't be more dissimilar. Of peasant origin, rotund and hearty, Roncalli was not really admired by his peers and was certainly not a warrior. But he had discreetly taken the initiative to help thousands of Jews by obtaining safe conducts for them,

certifying that they were good Catholics and could remain in Turkey, a neutral country. Against all expectations, he got on well with de Gaulle and brought calm to the situation.

Cardinal Tisserant returned to favour in rather a spectacular manner: he organised the first papal audience for General de Gaulle on 30 June 1944. A few weeks earlier, Tisserant obtained permission to appoint chaplains to the French Resistance fighters, which the local hierarchy had refused to do. In November, the French cardinal made a grand tour of France, in a vehicle provided by General de Gaulle. He announced to the latter that Roncalli had been appointed nuncio. In June 1944, the former military attaché in Rome during the 1930s, General Henri Parisot, was also back and got in touch with Tisserant, with whom he set up the main lines of cooperation between the French services and the Russicum (see the following chapter). The Rome–Paris axis was reactivated, and there were nothing insignificant about it.

Hartl, the SS officer sent by his bosses to Rome in 1944 to establish contact with the Western powers through the Vatican in order to propose a reversal of alliances against communism, explained after the war, during an interrogation by the Americans: “When the Vatican realised that the United States and the Soviet Union would be the big winners of the Second World War, it tried immediately to set up a bloc composed of Western European countries which France, the oldest daughter of the Church, would lead … The intention was to provide a counterweight to these two powers.” This was why the Holy See withdrew its support from the Vichy government and turned towards the Free French of de Gaulle.[1]

The OSS in Rome

In the same period, Donovan, the OSS head, met Pius XII, who decorated him with the Grand Cross of the Order of Saint Sylvester, the oldest and most prestigious papal order of knighthood. This award marked the beginning of a long-term collaboration between the Vatican and the American intelligence services. Morlión, an OSS agent, settled in Rome, where he became the CIP (Catholic International Press) correspondent and mixed with businessmen and intellectuals, politicians and clergymen. He organised meetings and drew up bulletins. He was handled by the OSS in

New York, and not by agents stationed in Rome. His code name was “Bernard Black”. Morlión travelled a lot in neutral or Western countries. He took advantage of his impressive access to the Vatican: he was able to report on the comments made by many of the cardinals about current affairs. Morlión, on the other hand, had little to say about the Pope: what he produced was limited to gossip doing the rounds of the Curia.

America’s desire to know what was being said and done behind the Vatican’s walls gave rise to a profusion of surprising means in the context of a world war that was far from over. According to a former agent for American intelligence, as early as the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945, the services got access to the telephone lines linking the Vatican with the rest of the world.[2] We were not able to find any traces of this in the OSS archives, nowadays available online, nor in those of the CIC (Counter Intelligence Corps). If this information turns out to be true, it would explain why the monsignori were always very cautious on the telephone, convinced as they were that they were being listened to.

In the summer of 1944, one of the most promising OSS agents settled in Rome; he was to play an important role in the following part of our story. James Jesus Angleton was the son of an American businessman who ran the Milan Italo-American Chamber of Commerce. Speaking three languages and educated at Yale, Angleton had the ideal profile for becoming an American spy in Italy. His father, resident in Italy for a long time, had been both a Freemason before the war, giving him access to a number of Italian politicians, and a knight of the Order of Malta, giving him access to the most influential Catholics in Europe and the United States.[3] Because of his knowledge of the country, he was appointed to head the “Italy” office (X2), and was posted to Britain while waiting for Italy to be invaded, arriving in the American Army’s baggage, and got down to work. He was supposed to purge the country of all Nazi agents left behind by the occupation and interrogate prisoners suspected of being German spies.

Thanks to his father, he had easy access to all the former regime’s notables whom the Allies had chosen to keep in place so as to prevent the country from falling into the hands of the powerful Communist Party. Major Angleton took up his quarters in the Via Sicilia, in the same block as the CIC, the military intelligence service, and the British services, but on a different floor. He was on excellent terms with the British and hardly spoke

to the men from the CIC, who described him as an “arrogant s.o.b.”. At the time Rome was crawling with Allied spies, who were nonetheless involved in terrible rivalries. Some of them were actively looking for Nazi war criminals, while others weren’t really bothered.

After 1944, in his post in Berne, Allen Dulles opened the way for a selective reconciliation with ex-Nazis who might render certain services. Angleton, meeting him in Rome in October 1945, went along with this strategy. He negotiated with Prince Junio Valerio Borghese, no doubt Italy’s most famous Fascist officer. A former combatant in the Spanish Civil War on Franco’s side, commander of a submarine and a past master in clandestine naval warfare, Borghese had distinguished himself by the boldness of his command of manned torpedoes. Angleton pragmatically offered to allow him to escape a probable sentence of death by his helping the Allies to clear the Italian ports, mined by the Germans, such as at Livorno. He negotiated his surrender and put him up him in a clandestine shelter. He was tried by an American military court, unknown to the Italians, and set free in 1949. During the following decades, traces of the man whose nickname was the “Black Prince” were to be found in various affairs and plots implicating nostalgic Fascists.

Angleton developed excellent contacts within the Vatican. He was thus informed that two Nazis known to the services, Eugen Dollmann and Eugen Wenner, had escaped from a British detention camp near Rimini. Dollman had found refuge in a Milan hospital with the help of Cardinal Alfredo Ildefonso Schuster, one of the prelates who had compromised himself most in collaborating with the Fascists. Dollmann was General Wolff’s right-hand man when he negotiated his surrender with Allen Dulles at the beginning of 1945. If he had fallen into the hands of the communists, it could have led to embarrassing revelations. Angleton organised both men’s exfiltration.[4] This operation made several colleagues in the CIC splutter a little. Dollmann was lodged in Rome in an apartment he was forbidden to leave so that he would not be recognised and arrested. Because he was bored, he rummaged around in the library, which contained an impressive collection of sadomasochist literature. The previous tenant had been a German lady, one of Mussolini’s mistresses. The former SS, who was more interested in gay parties, ended up bored with this reading and, and, trusting his false papers too much, went out for a walk in Rome. He was recognised by an informer and captured in a cinema by CIC agents. After he’d spent a

few months in a Roman prison, Angleton managed to have him transferred to an American prison in Frankfurt, then got him out discreetly.[5]

In December 1944, a very young American, Martin Quigley,[6] joined the OSS team in Rome, on the instructions of William Donovan and his “Italy” section chief, Earl Brennan. Curiously, he was not seconded to Angleton, who seemed not to know about his mission, which involved gathering any information from Catholic organisations that was useful for continuing the war against the Axis forces. As a young graduate from Georgetown University, Quigley personally knew Donovan when the latter was still an associate in one of the prestigious New York law offices. One of Donovan’s notable clients was the RKO cinema studios, which had come up against difficulties with the anti-trust authorities, who were forcing the big studios to give up their picture houses. Quigley joined the propaganda services, in charge of film news. In 1942, he volunteered to join the OSS, which recruited him while keeping his cinema cover: officially Quigley was now part of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors, which supervised Hollywood film distribution worldwide, under the iron rule of Will Hays, the creator of the famous “Hays Code” which enforced moral standards on American cinema. Quigley went to Rome in December 1944.

Under the cover of obtaining the best distribution possible for American films in liberated Italy, he had to make the most contacts possible within the Vatican and Catholic organisations. With Italy in ruins, it may seem surprising that the Italian authorities and those of the Vatican were worried about cinema. But the seventh art had become a constant preoccupation of the Catholic authorities in the inter-war period, because of its supposed influence on spectators’ morals. As the representative of Hollywood, Quigley was invited by the most select Roman circles, and even Pius XII asked him to attend an audience. So as not to reveal his cover, Quigley was obliged during this meeting to give a drab account of American proposals for the application of moral codes to Italian cinema.

Before leaving, Donovan gave Quigley the following instructions directly: “Pay attention to the possibilities of opening up a secret communications channel with Tokyo to negotiate Japan’s surrender. After all, the Vatican is one of the rare places where this might be possible.” To avoid being accused of allowing religious interference in American affairs, successive US presidents (and Roosevelt was no exception to the rule) had

to keep their contacts with Rome at a visible distance. There was therefore no question of making the Pope the official mediator negotiating an end to the fighting; the purpose was only to see if an unofficial channel for discussion could be opened via the Vatican. Quigley's initial contact in Rome was Father Vincent McCormick, the Jesuit rector of the Gregorian Seminary, who lived in the Jesuit headquarters, very close to the Vatican, and who welcomed American Jesuits when they arrived in Rome. McCormick was the Pope's official translator, producing the English versions of his proclamations; this gave him regular access to the Holy Father. The American intelligence services thought of him as their unofficial contact in the Vatican.

Another valuable contact made by Quigley was Pietro Galeazzi, the Vatican architect administering the city. This friend of the Pope's spent time with him almost every evening. An Americanophile, he was also a close friend of Cardinal Spellman.

A third contact made by Quigley turned out to be of great importance for the next part of the mission. Mgr Egidio Vagnozzi was a young prelate with a promising career ahead of him in the Vatican diplomatic service; he found himself blocked in Rome while waiting to take up the post he had been appointed to in Portugal. He spoke excellent English and, above all, he regularly came across Father Tomizawa, counsellor at the Japanese Embassy: both of them lived in the Santa Martha residence, where they occasionally ate together. Asking for Mgr Vagnozzi to intervene was an obvious move: one doesn't expect prelates to take diplomatic initiatives, even less that they express themselves in the name of the Pope without being invited to do so by their superiors. During a private meeting, a few days before the German surrender, Quigley decided to lay all his cards on the table and reveal his true identity as a spy and his mission; it was limited to opening up a communication channel. If the Japanese were to respond favourably, Washington would then send an authorised negotiator within 48 hours. Nothing by way of contributing to opening peace talks was contrary to the mission of the Church or to Pius XII's diplomatic ambitions. However, the Americans required strict secrecy, vis-à-vis the Vatican hierarchy as well, which greatly embarrassed Vagnozzi. After much hesitation, he nonetheless agreed to initiate contacts. It was agreed that he would inform Father Tomizawa as follows: a Catholic American businessman with access to the highest echelons of the American

government wanted to open up negotiations to find a peace agreement. Frightened by this initiative, Father Tomizawa nonetheless reported to Ambassador Harada, who reacted with caution but decided to inform Tokyo. His wire (its contents were very cautious because he didn't want to be accused of defeatism) was sent from the Vatican, encoded according to the "Magic" system, which the Japanese had been using for a long time. They didn't know that the Americans had broken the code and could therefore read a good part of their military and diplomatic correspondence (it was one of the factors in the Japanese defeat in the Pacific). On his side, the monsignor covered himself in respect of his superiors by informing them of the steps being taken. Not doing so would no doubt have compromised his future career.

As Tokyo was some time in responding, Ambassador Harada took it upon himself to ask what the terms of the peace negotiation would be. Quigley had no mandate to negotiate in the name of the United States, but he understood that nothing would eventuate if certain possible concessions were not dangled in front of the Japanese. Knowing how much they were attached to their Emperor and to the integrity of their country, he answered, cautiously letting it be understood that these aspects could be part of the negotiations. This was in contradiction to the official position of the United States, which wanted an "unconditional surrender" from Japan. But Quigley supposed—correctly—that this was propaganda for internal use within the United States. It justified sending another cable to the Japanese ambassador.

In May 1945 a communication was developed in the heart of the Vatican, by the intermediation of prelates, which put an end to the war without it being necessary to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Alas, neither side seized this opportunity.

Donovan's instructions to Quigley revealed the maverick nature of the OSS's head well, and he relied on his personal contacts with President Roosevelt, who allowed him to get in touch with him in an emergency. But with Roosevelt's death on 12 April 1945, nothing was the same any longer. His successor, Harry Truman, did not know Donovan and was wary of him. He was obviously not aware of an attempt to communicate with the Japanese. In Tokyo, the diplomats showed they were not interested, firstly because the real power was in military hands, and, secondly, because negotiations had already begun in the greatest secrecy with Moscow, which was considered a possible mediator with Washington.

Finally, Quigley's initiative came at the worst possible moment: the OSS's Rome station was in trouble. The head of the Rome station, Vincent Scamporino, had just been called back to the United States. The reason was the bad mood of the British intelligence services in Italy, who thought that, in the sharing out of liberated Europe among the victorious powers, Italy was part of their hunting ground. The English couldn't bear the activism of the OSS, which was accountable to nobody, and they secured Scamporino's replacement by Richard Mazzarini, formerly based in London, so as to ensure better relations with the British services. Because he was in the middle of a large-scale internal scandal, Scamporino had been less able to defend his position: he had spent a fortune on an informer who turned out to be a swindler.

Intelligence swindle

In the autumn of 1944, Scamporino received a surprising proposal from a well-placed source in the Vatican. He proposed nothing less than Vatican working documents, transcriptions of papal audiences, and even first-hand information about strategic Japanese sites which would offer first-class bombing targets. This information came from the apostolic delegate in Japan. The proposal was perhaps a way of softening the anger of the Americans, who didn't understand why the Vatican had established formal diplomatic relations with this country almost at the very moment the Japanese went to war with America.

The end of the war was approaching and with it would come perhaps the dismantling of the OSS. The service wanted therefore to show its zeal and prove how efficient it was. Not too many questions were therefore asked about this miraculous source. James Angleton had serious doubts about its authenticity; it was called Vessel, and its products seemed to him to be too good to be true, coming as they did from a milieu as closed as that of the Vatican. But it would nonetheless enable him to make an interesting contact. Angleton did indeed meet with Mgr Montini from the Secretariat of State, on the pretext of telling him that there was a member of the Secretariat who was "leaking" sensitive documents. Would it be possible for him to identify the source?

After investigating, Mgr Montini was all smiles: there was no mole. The documents were pure inventions. Another coup by Scattolini. The journalist

Virgile Scattolini had made a name for himself in occupied Rome as a journalist who was very well informed about what was happening inside the Vatican. When war broke out, Scattolini was an author who lived more or less from his writings: film criticism in *L'Osservatore Romano*, novels and pleasantly licentious plays. During the war he saw a tremendous opportunity to diversify his literary production for a very select and wealthy clientele. Since he lived near the Vatican, which fascinated so many chancelleries and secret services, not to mention the press agencies, why not produce a confidential information letter? It was a delicate matter, but not an impossible one, to supply a report on what was going on behind the thick Vatican walls every week. What was needed was a good knowledge of the habits, the morals and the organisation of the Secretariat of State. Then he had to be kept informed of the papal audiences, day by day, which was hardly complicated. A good diplomatic and geopolitical knowledge enabled him to arouse the interest of readers from there onwards by mixing the true (open) information and embroidering it with plausible suppositions and a few sensational inventions. His success was due to the unconstrained fantasies that the Vatican gave rise to. He attracted press agencies (who in turn fed the big dailies throughout the world), German and Japanese embassies, German and USSR secret services, and soon even the OSS.

In January 1945, Scattolini imagined a scenario in which negotiations were in the pipeline for peace in the Pacific, but which originated with the Japanese. According to him, steps had been taken by Ambassador Harada. At first Pius XII had refused to pass them on, thinking the Japanese demands were not acceptable to the Americans. The OSS main office took this information seriously enough to transmit the file to the State Department.

But, determined as he was to continue the newsletter which was much appreciated by his readers, Scattolini made a terrible mistake by saying that Roosevelt's personal envoy to the Vatican, Myron Taylor, had had an initial secret discussion with Ambassador Harada. This obvious invention, which the State Department denied, caused the informer's disgrace and also that of his controlling officer. As a result it was easier to understand why Quigley's initiative had not been taken seriously. In matters of espionage, as with questions of money, bad money drives out good money: false information ran into real information and discredited it.

The unmasking of this false source served to heighten Angleton's stature in Washington—at the same time it embarrassed the OSS, which had transmitted syntheses of the Vessel reports to the general staff, to the Department of State and to the White House. It was the beginning of a solid friendship between Angleton and Montini.

At the beginning of 1945, Montini played what is a still little-known role of go-between between the OSS and German officers for the surrender of troops operating in the North of Italy. On 8 March 1945, SS *Obergruppenführer* Karl Wolff, accompanied by Eugen Dollmann, Himmler's representative in Italy, and by the Italian industrialist Baron Luigi Parrilli, met up with Allen Dulles in Zurich in the company of Captain Rothpletz of Swiss counter-intelligence. Cardinal Schuster, the Archbishop of Milan, had organised this meeting with Montini's full approval.

Wolff thought he was capable of persuading Field Marshal Albert Kesselring to put an end to the fighting in northern Italy. He gave a few guarantees of goodwill such as stopping the fighting against the Italian partisans. In return he asked for his troops to be allowed to retreat in good order through the Austrian alpine passes. On 19 March, Dulles met with Wolff again at Ascona in Switzerland, near the Italian border. Roosevelt had informed Stalin about the secret negotiations; the latter took the news badly. He feared that a separate peace in Italy would enable the Germans to move troops from there to the Eastern Front. One may indeed wonder if that wasn't the German's initial intention and to what degree Wolff really did act on his own initiative.

Wolff made a return trip to Berlin on 19 April, but the Russians were already there. After he returned from Berlin, Wolff left for Lucerne on 24 April, having been warned that the talks had been interrupted by pressure from Stalin. Having learnt of the death of Hitler on 30 April, Kesselring decided to capitulate.

The Church in the front line

Even before the war ended, the Americans were aware that another conflict was emerging and that the Church was getting ready to play a considerable part in it. On 2 May 1945, Quigley met Cardinal Tisserant, who deplored the fact that, since they had entered Italy, the Allies had not raised the moral

standards of political life and had allowed the black market to flourish: according to him, this provided fertile ground for the future seizure of power by the communists. This was forgetting rather quickly that you can't ask for the Mafia's help and then fight its trafficking. Tisserant reported that the Russians had started crushing all religious activity in East Prussia. Their attitude varied depending on the country: in Poland all resistance was fiercely quelled whereas the Hungarian communists were more accommodating. Tisserant thought that Roosevelt had conceded far too much to Stalin, and that this would have consequences in the longer term.

To another American spy, a CIC agent, William Gowen, "Tisserant asserted that he thought firmly that there was a 50% chance that Russia would provoke another war that same year". According to him, the Russians would be "in a favourable position to submerge Western Europe … an opportunity that Russia was aware would never be repeated." The feeling of urgency was palpable: "Evidently, Russia finds itself at present in a favourable position to make itself master of Western Europe, and all the more easily in that it has the support of a war machine reinforced by the incorporation of the German zone under its boot and by the many communist organisations."[7]

It must be admitted that the Vatican was receiving perturbing signals. Arrests and deportations resumed again in the USSR after the war. In September 1944, the Ukraine and Poland signed an agreement to exchange ethnic minorities, triggering a succession of massacres and the arrest of priests who refused to leave their dioceses. Four million Ukrainian faithful were deprived of their 3 500 priests, and were sometimes forced to convert to Orthodoxy. Pius XII revealed how alarmed he was in the encyclical *Orientales Omnes* issued in December 1945.

Tisserant's Polish sources were used as material for a book of denunciations, *Il Bolscevismo e la Religione* (Bolshevism and Religion), brought out by a publishing house created for the occasion by a person close to the Vatican. Quigley let it be known that Tisserant was its main inspiration. This publication made the Soviet ambassador in Italy furious and he demanded that the Italian government ban the book. What he got was a ban on the public display of the book. It continued to be sold under the shelf. Polish battalions incorporated into the Italian Army bought 2 000 copies so they could distribute it.

The Vatican got its act together and revived the secret war against communism, the major enemy of the 1930s. Three months after end of the war, the OSS intercepted a message from Pius XII to Father Norbert de Boynes, the Vicar-General of the Jesuits, ordering priests to be sent under cover to find proof of the USSR's financial support of the Italian communists. The document did not say whether the Jesuit intelligence agents managed to infiltrate the Communist Party. In August 1945, the ONARMO (Opera Nazionale di Assistenza Religiosa e Morale agli Operai, or National Work for Religious and Moral Assistance to Workers) was created by Mgr Aurelio Torrazza, who was close to the Bishop of Genoa, Giuseppe Siri. It operated in working-class areas to combat Marxist initiatives.

Pius XII's anti-communist zeal made him a valuable ally for the United States in the coming Cold War. The Pope supported the Marshall Plan, intended to rebuild Western Europe and contain the communist threat, as soon as it was announced in June 1947. Only a handful of the initiated knew that a hidden part of this plan would enable the Church to be financed in its struggle against communist influence in Italy.

The coming war was going to be global. Unlimited funds would be needed to finance it. In the Allied secret services, people were aware that some ex-Nazis could turn out to be useful in the secret war to come; all the more so, as they had a lot to be forgiven for and one could keep the upper hand over them. In the Vatican, several priests drew attention to themselves by the help they gave fleeing Nazis and collaborationists.

Mercy for the war criminals

Created in 1944, the Pontifical Assistance Commission, directed by Ferdinando Baldelli, aimed to help POWs and persons displaced by the war. Pius XII gave it the job of deploying the Vatican's resources in favour of Catholic refugees. It was put under the authority of Cardinal Montini. Despite increasing numbers of staff, the task turned out to be formidable, so much so that it was necessary to create a number of subcommittees, distinguished by nationality. Some of them developed a very political approach. The commission, theoretically neutral, fell under papal authority. Montini busied himself with finding funds: he appealed to his American friends, who put up several million dollars. The Vatican Bank played a

clandestine but fundamental role during this period: apart from the suitcases of money that circulated, it was the only source of foreign currency. Without this circuit, the funds for aid to the refugees could not have existed, at least not on such a large scale.

In the United States, the Bishops Conference played a big role in securing and directing funds to the pontifical aid programme. Cardinal Spellman was its lynchpin. As chaplain to the US armed forces, he went to Rome several times to ensure that the follow-up and coordination work was satisfactory. He appointed Mgr Andrew Landi from Brooklyn, who distributed funds directly to certain subcommittees.

The Pontifical Assistance Commission evidently had a political agenda: to defend and propagate the Catholic faith, particularly in Eastern Europe, and counter the harmful influence of communism. It was in this context that the help given to certain Nazi war criminals has to be understood.

The commission created emigration offices and sent several delegations to South America to study opportunities in several countries and negotiate for European refugees to be settled there. The Church was solidly implanted in these countries and could thus ensure that the settlement of refugees and assistance to them were properly carried out.

One of the Pontifical Commission’s most controversial subcommittees was the Austrian aid committee directed by the pro-Nazi bishop Alois Hudal.

The Brown Bishop

It was surprising that the Vatican had appointed the most openly pro-Nazi bishop to visit German-speaking civilian internees on Italian soil (a group known to include many former Nazis). It was even more surprising that the Americans accepted him, when they were perfectly well aware of his background.

Alois Hudal was born in Graz in 1885 and followed the usual career: theological studies, priesthood and so forth. He was a military chaplain during World War I. In 1923 he was appointed rector of the German Church in Rome, the Collegio Teutonico de Santa Maria dell’Anima, which made him the dean of all German and Austrian priests in Rome. In 1933, Secretary of State Pacelli appointed him bishop, then “assistant to the

pontifical throne", a purely honorary title. As soon as Hitler seized power, Hudal took up Nazism with enthusiasm. It wasn't important to him that Pope Pius XI rejected National Socialism. In 1937, Hudal published *The Foundations of National Socialism*, of which he sent an inscribed copy to Hitler: "To the Siegfried of German grandeur". The book was coldly received in Rome. Hudal now came under surveillance. He was nevertheless not punished, because in the Vatican that sort of thing was not done, but his career went no further.

In 1944, when the Allies freed Rome, Hudal suddenly felt himself to be no more the "German Bishop of Rome" and reinvented himself as the "Austrian Bishop of Rome", concentrating entirely on aid to Austrian refugees. He was assisted by a strange character, Baron Berger-Waldenegg, who served as an interface with the American secret services, i.e. American army intelligence, and also with the OSS. Thanks to postal censorship, which enabled his correspondence with a number of far-right personalities to be read, American spies knew what to expect. They knew that Hudal often sheltered Nazi fugitives in his church. Their rooms were situated near a secret passage which led to the church's crypt. They could hide there in case there was an unexpected visitor.

In Rome, Hudal was assisted by Mgr Heinemann, based in Santa Maria dell'Anima, and Mgr Bayer, installed in the former German Embassy. According to a 1947 report by American intelligence, "Bayer was in charge of everything to do with helping German refugees in the Vatican." Many were sheltered by Bayer on the premises of the former embassy. Bayer worked together with Dr Willy Nix, director of the Committee for a Free Germany in Italy, an organisation that presented itself as anti-Nazi. In reality, it helped fugitive Nazis, found them places to stay in South America, and sent them to Genoa with Red Cross passports.

So that he could operate freely, Hudal made an agreement with Italian police officers. When the Carabinieri came across Nazis on their lists, they pointed them in the direction of the churches and convents Hudal had indicated. This agreement functioned fairly well, except in extreme cases: in Genoa, a group of 110 Nazis chanted German war songs from the bridge of a ship leaving port. Unfortunately for them, the ship broke down and had to return to port. The Carabinieri had no choice but to arrest them after this provocation.

In 1946, one of the American CIC agents managed to infiltrate Dr Nix's organisation by passing himself off as a Nazi fugitive. As soon as he arrived, he was given a letter of recommendation, which enabled him to obtain a Red Cross passport. The agent was sheltered in a huge villa, among a number of people of various origins. Thinking that they had enough to go on, the Americans raided the place and arrested several lodgers for questioning. It transpired that Dr Nix's network included German and Italian nobles and priests. At the beginning of 1947, the Italian secret services decided to arrest Nix, who was sheltering in the Vatican. "We always suspected that Dr Nix was acting with the protection of the Vatican. His fleeing and sheltering in the Vatican are today the proof of this." So noted the agent Vincent La Vista in his report.[8]

Outside Rome, Hudal "carried on spreading the good word" to the camps of prisoners, informing them of the escape channels likely to help them. One of his first visits was to Walter Rauff, the highest-ranking officer of the SS security services for north-west Italy. On 29 April 1945, the day the Germans surrendered, Rauff received a false passport and settled in a Milan apartment. Arrested by the Americans a month later, he was rescued by Hudal, who had him transferred to a military hospital. OSS teams took charge of him. James Angleton was very interested in the archives of the Fascist secret police that Rauff had placed in a secure place, and in his anti-communist zeal.

Reinstalled in his Milan apartment, Rauff got in touch with the Archbishop of Genoa, Mgr Siri. He helped him work out his exfiltration route towards South America. Hudal found him a job as a teacher in a Catholic school and had his family exfiltrated from the Soviet occupation zone in Austria. Having kept several of the agents that worked for him when he ran the Nazi security services in Milan, Rauff then helped other Nazi officers to organise their flight. It was thanks to him that Adolf Eichmann escaped. Unlike a number of his colleagues, Rauff remained in Italy, working for the CIA and the Italian services for several years. American interest decreased, which is why, with the help of the secretary of the Archbishop of Milan, Rauff emigrated to Syria, then Ecuador and finally Chile. In 1962, West Germany unsuccessfully demanded his extradition. During his funeral in 1984, a number of his comrades from all over South America flocked to pay homage to his mortal remains with a final Hitlerian salute.

To support such networks, Hudal benefited from financial gifts brought by another SS officer: SS *Sturmbannführer* Friedrich Schwend had been recruited by German Army counter-espionage, specialising in the currency markets. He was given the task of distributing false banknotes, mass-produced by the workshop of Jewish counterfeiters set up by the SS within Sachsenhausen. Schwend's job was to fence this false currency and get hold of gold, diamonds and raw materials. His purchasing offices were in Trieste and Milan.[9] Schwend put all or part of the sums that he had not spent at Rauff's disposal. For his part, Hudal took on the job of asking for papers at the Rome branch of the Red Cross: in the post-war chaos, the Red Cross issued new temporary identity papers to displaced persons, valid only on Italian territory.

After the end of the war, a number of Ustasha Croatian soldiers were to be found in the Italian camps, together with SS of various nationalities who were often Catholics. Mgr Hudal denounced the miserable conditions they were kept in: no food, no medical care, and so on. Fiercely anti-communist, he thought that these prisoners had only carried out orders and were in no ways war criminals. On their own initiative, the subcommittees started to free some of them according to a regular plan: the Pontifical Assistance Commission drew up a letter of recommendation for the Red Cross, which alone could get hold of travel documents and food cards for them. The secretary of the commission's foreign service signed all the letters that were presented to him without checking the truth of the interested parties' declarations. The commission was also busy asking for visas. One of the priests implicated in these operations, Father Anton Weber, defended himself thus: "Even if war criminals had turned up using their real names, we could not have known that they were war criminals."[10]

Hudal was not satisfied with the substantial material help given by his organisation. He wanted to speed up his protégés' emigration process. This was why in 1948 he asked the Argentine head of state, Juan Perón, for 5 000 visas, not for humanitarian refugees, but for "anti-Bolshevik fighters" whose "sacrifices during the war had saved Europe from Soviet domination".[11]

One of the most spectacular of the legal escapes that Bishop Hudal organised concerned the former Treblinka extermination camp commandant, Franz Stangl. This man had succeeded in fleeing from

Germany and reached Rome on foot. Directed by hearsay, he rushed to Hudal, who gave him shelter and work at once in the library of the German College. A few months later, Stangl embarked for Brazil, where he became a mechanic in a Volkswagen factory.

In his memoirs, Hudal boldly admitted his exploits: “I thank God for opening my eyes and offering me the unmerited grace of visiting and comforting a lot of victims in the prisons and concentration camps during the post-war period, and of having been able to save a large number of them from the clutches of their executioners, making their flight easier towards more generous countries with false identity papers […] I felt obliged after 1945 to devote my charitable work essentially to the former National Socialists and Fascists, particularly the so-called ‘war criminals’.”[12]

* * *

The German subcommittee, as well as the Hungarian, Slovene and Polish ones, was not to be outdone. Another subcommittee that received much attention was the Croatian one, run by the rector, Juraj Magjerec, and Mgr Krunoslav Draganović of the San Girolamo Institute in Rome. It wasn’t until 1950 and various scandals revealed by the Italian press that the Vatican decided to shut down the committees that were most under fire.

In 1949, the death by natural causes of SS *Sturmbannführer* Otto Gustav Wächter was announced by the newspapers; he had been guilty of war crimes in Warsaw and eastern Galicia: since the end of the war, he had been living peacefully in a Roman monastery. Questioned by the press, Hudal boldly admitted to having helped this officer as an act of Christian charity. On 3 February 1950, Mgr Baldelli informed him that his subcommittee was being disbanded. This did not prevent Hudal from continuing his activities on a private basis. In April 1951, the Austrian bishops asked for him to resign; this took place the following year. His error had been in admitting publicly what other subcommittees carried on doing more discreetly.[13]

It is not possible that Montini was totally ignorant of these subcommittees’ activities: the records attest that not everybody in the Vatican approved of the action of this South American channel: for example, his subordinate, Mgr Patrick Carroll, wrote this to him on 10 March 1947: “The fact that the pontifical committee plays a significant role

in transporting refugees to South America, and this without adequate preparation, could expose the Holy See to rather severe criticism from authorities incapable of differentiating between the Vatican and the committees or institutions claiming they belong to it."[14] Some of Montini's biographers have tried to make Baldelli, the head of the Pontifical Assistance Commission, responsible for Hudal's and his partners' "blunders", but Baldelli was promoted to bishop in 1959, which doesn't really fit with this version. An unexpected result of these Nazi war criminals' channels of escape was an unprecedented wave of conversions to Catholicism, traces of which can be found in the registers of monasteries situated along the route that the runaways took. A number of SS fanatics and Nazi officers, fearing neither God nor man, or of Protestant persuasion, saw nothing amiss in adopting the Catholic faith, if this was the price of a ticket to escape. These conversions enabled the clergy responsible for the programme to consider their action as the reward for a spiritual conversion which would allow for the horrors of the past to be forgiven or at least put at a safe distance. An example has been quoted by Gerald Steinacher: the records of the Sisters of the Cross of the Brixen Sanatorium in Italy revealed that dozens of "German soldiers" (with compromised pasts, in fact) had been christened in the hospital's Chapel of the Sacred Heart and had "renounced heresy". Steinacher concluded: "In the eyes of certain priests, the Nazis were the new heretics. If they showed they repented, they could then be baptised again, since it was not possible for them to prove that their first baptism had been correctly administered. The baptism (but also the conversion) was thus in certain cases an instrument of de-Nazification in the hands of the Church."[15] It must be added that this was the first step in issuing de-Nazification certificates, which the Allies didn't examine too closely.

In the eyes of Pius XII, most of the responsibility for the war crimes and the "Final Solution" rested with a handful of highly placed Nazi leaders. The lower echelons simply obeyed orders. The Nazi war criminals who were subsequently converted were simply lost sheep that finally opened their eyes to the teachings of the Church.

The Croatian association

At the beginning of 1947, the CIC infiltrated an agent into the monastery at San Girolamo, on Via Tomacelli, in Rome. The agent, Robert Mudd, wrote in his report: “Anybody who wants to enter this monastery has to submit to a search to finds arms and identity papers. He has to answer questions, say where he comes from, who he is, who he knows, what the aim of his visit is and how he learnt that there were Croats in the monastery. All the doors are locked; those that are not, are guarded by an armed sentry and a password is needed to go from one room to another. The whole area is watched over by young armed Ustasha in civilian clothes and the Ustasha salute is given all day long.”[16]

A number of former dignitaries of the Croatian regime had gone to earth in the monastery. According to American intelligence, they made frequent return trips to the Vatican in a car with a chauffeur and a diplomatic number plate. The CIC special agent thought that the Vatican was organising their flight to South America. His British colleagues thought likewise: one or more responsible people within the Vatican supported the escape channel arrangements, though it was uncertain what exactly was the role played by the Pope in this matter.

In the centre of this confused game was Mgr Krunoslav Draganović. Born in 1903, he was sent as the protégé of the Archbishop of Sarajevo, Ivan Šarić, to study in Rome in 1932, at the Pontifical Oriental Institute. He returned to Archbishop Šarić in 1935. In 1941, as we have seen, the fascist Ustasha party proclaimed Croatia’s independence, to place itself better under the iron rule of Nazi Germany. Despite the neutrality that his status as a man of God demanded, Draganović was then appointed to direct the Colonisation Bureau based in Zagreb. In the first year, Ante Pavelić’s regime distinguished itself by massacring almost 500 000 Orthodox Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In 1943, Draganović settled in Rome in the Croatian College situated within the San Girolamo degli Illirici monastery. After the war, the monastery served as a logistics base for helping Croatian refugees flee Marshal Tito’s vengeance. When Secretary of State Maglione died in 1944, it was the Under-Secretary of State, Montini, who became its supervisor. He appointed Father Draganović to liaise with the Croats.

At the end of 1944, the Vatican asked for the Croatian priest to be allowed to visit the camps in which his compatriots were being held. This was naturally a purely humanitarian mission. The Allies agreed, knowing the man concerned full well. He was thus able to go through northern Italy

and quite imperturbably organise an escape network for the former Ustasha, operating from the Confraternity at San Girolamo, which was given the status of a Croatian committee within the Pontifical Assistance Commission. Draganović was in close touch with Colonel Findlay, the director of the section of occupying forces in charge of displaced persons and repatriation, as well as with the Italian minister of foreign affairs, Migliore, who was responsible for the secret services. Draganović also went regularly to the army and intelligence HQ in Rome, where he was informed in detail of the arrests being prepared.

Several testimonies have given a better idea of how the committee worked. A former assistant chaplain of the Ustasha militia, Father Cecelja, with the rank of lieutenant colonel, was part of the official delegation sent in 1941 by Pavelić to Rome to receive Pius XII's blessing. In May 1944, he abandoned his post and settled in Vienna and founded the local branch of the Croatian Red Cross, as a screen for his work in assisting the escape network. Thanks to his Red Cross papers and to an American pass, he was able to move around freely and later admitted to having helped war criminals to change their identity. In October 1945, however, he was arrested by the Americans and spent eighteen months in jail. Joseph Hurley, an American bishop, who was the Pope's representative in Yugoslavia, came to his rescue and, although a commission of inquiry concluded that he had taken part in collaborationist activities, the State Department ordered him to be released. He resumed his Nazi smuggling activities. According to its own evidence, the Vatican knew of and approved of Draganović's activities.

Draganović was also helped by the new Archbishop of Genoa, Giuseppe Siri. He had never really had any Fascist sympathies and had even protected the Jews in his diocese. But that didn't prevent him from being fiercely anti-communist. In Naples, he created his own emigration assistance organisation called Auxilium and organised a new channel to Argentina, taking charge of those sent by Draganović and Hudal. Meanwhile, in Austria, Father Cecelja picked out former Ustasha officers in the prison camps and sent them to Draganović, via various trusted monasteries (notably in South Tyrol and northern Italy). From Rome, Draganović sent them to Naples, where they were taken charge of by another Croatian priest. In full knowledge of the facts, these clergymen exfiltrated several hundred Nazi war criminals by this route.

The Allied intelligence services knew that San Girolamo sheltered dozens of Croatian war criminals. But it was also the centre of anti-communist activities directed against the new regime in Belgrade, and Draganović could be useful to them.

According to CIC reports, the Croatian dictator Ante Pavelić fled Zagreb on 6 May 1945 with four lorry-loads of soldiers and a treasure of gold coins with an estimated value of $80 million. On the way, the dictator and his men changed into civilian clothes and adopted borrowed names. Many of his men deserted when a column of Russian tanks appeared. The little group remaining was sheltered by an Austrian sympathiser.

Without encountering any problems, it passed through the British occupied zone before falling into the hands of American troops. American military intelligence was convinced that the British had favoured the escape, unless Pavelic had paid a very high price. According to an American report, the British had seized 150 million Swiss francs held by the Ustasha on the border between Switzerland and Austria and agreed that the rest, some 200 million Swiss francs, be transported to the Vatican.[17] Did the Vatican know of the origin of these Swiss francs? If it was government gold, it would have been presented in the form of gold ingots bearing the stamp of the Croatian Treasury. If the money was actually placed in the Vatican Bank, it was no doubt credited to the account of the Pontifical Assistance Commission, to benefit the Croatian refugees. In which case, it was the people at San Girolamo who shared out the money.

Father Draganović agreed to answer the questions of the CIC special agent Gowen. He confirmed that the deliveries of the Croatian gold really did take place in his presence and that he had been able to use part of it to finance Pavelić's flight. Annoyed that this interrogation could have occurred in the first place, Montini complained to James Angleton, who put a stop to Gowen's inquiry. But Gowen had time to interrogate enough Croats who had taken part in the gold transfer for him to reach his own firm conclusions. In his mind there was absolutely no doubt that the Vatican had really accepted this gold and that the IOR had stocked it in its vaults without it appearing in its accounts. Military intelligence produced a number of reports stating that the Vatican had taken on the job of payment for the exfiltration network of the Croats, coordinated by the Franciscan priest Mandić.[18] In April 1947, British soldiers arrested one of the

network’s men, General Ante Moškov, in possession of 3 200 pieces of gold and 75 diamonds. The Pope asked in vain for him to be freed.

Draganović now had complete control of part of the Ustasha war treasure. During the summer of 1945, Pavelić’s representatives told him that an extra 400 kg of gold, together with a large quantity of notes, had been hidden at Wolfsberg in Austria. They asked him to repatriate it to Rome and place it all in a safe place. Draganović himself transported two trunks of gold ingots. Another part of the treasure (2 400 kg of gold and various securities) was discovered by the Americans in Berne, where the Ustasha converted the gold into currency on the black market so as to send funds to South America.

In the summer of 1947, the British and American intelligence services knew exactly where Pavelić was staying, with a dozen people, in a property belonging to the Church on the Via Giacomo Venezian. When moving around, he used a car with a Vatican number plate. It was impossible to arrest him in the building, which was an extension of the Vatican, and plans to capture him during one of his excursions, which were too complex to put into practice, came to nothing. Indeed, the Allies seemed to give up on the idea of catching him. The atmosphere had changed in 1947 and, for many Ustasha now employed by the British and American services, Pavelić had become a symbol. Besides, his arrest would be extremely compromising for the Vatican. On 11 October 1948, bearing a Red Cross passport and with a false Hungarian identity, Pavelić embarked in Genoa for Buenos Aires, where Perón’s agents welcomed him discreetly.

In 1998, the American State Department commissioned an inquiry into the war booty accumulated by the Ustasha. In its conclusion, the special delegate, Stuart Eizenstat, noted: “We have to ask ourselves about the behaviour of the pontifical administration which, although it was not compromised with the Ustasha, could not ignore what was going on.”[19] Former members of British intelligence asserted for a long time that the Vatican was not alone in protecting Pavelić. In reality, it was with the full agreement of the Americans that the Holy See acted as it did.

The American CIC had decided to recruit Draganović. It would have been too awkward for them to recruit war criminals officially and to offer them American citizenship: this would have triggered a host of difficult questions from the State Department and Immigration Service bureaucrats.

The most notable person to benefit from the services of the Draganović network was none other than Klaus Barbie, who had become Klaus Altmann in order to allow him to reach Bolivia. The “Butcher of Lyons” and his family could no longer remain in Germany as the French secret services were actively looking for him. They were therefore moved at the beginning of 1951 from Augsburg to Salzburg with a transit visa, then to Genoa where Draganović set them up in the Nazionale Hotel.[20] The priest furnished them with all the necessary papers, and eleven days later they embarked for Buenos Aires. The CIC team breathed a sigh of relief.

In 1947, the Truman Doctrine obliged them to put the struggle against communism above tracking down war criminals. The CIA was created and soon recruited Draganović. From 1947 onwards, the Croatian emigration office to Argentina worked flat out in the San Girolamo monastery. Argentina already sheltered a large Croatian population and Draganović had good relations with the Argentine authorities, who simplified and industrialised the visa formalities so that it was now possible to obtain them by the thousand just by sending in lists of names.

The exfiltration channels towards Argentina were not the initiative of only a few isolated prelates, as has been often asserted. In reality, in June 1946 Pius XII let the new Perón government know through its ambassador in Rome that he wanted to organise the clandestine emigration of persons sheltered by the Vatican or held in prisoner camps.[21] This step, attested by the Argentine archives, gives the lie to the idea that the Pope was not implicated in the setting up of the Argentine channel.

Perón had spent two years as the military attaché in Rome from 1939 to 1941. There he made solid contacts not only with the Fascist regime but also with the German secret services, with which he shared “a vision of the world rather like yours”, according to the Sicherheitsdienst boss, Walter Schellenberg. On 4 June 1943, Perón took part in a military *coup d’état*. He became president on 4 June 1946 and remained in that position until September 1955.

Before the war, there already existed a large German community in Argentina, and the country’s declaration of war against Germany in March 1945 was nothing but window dressing, intended to mollify the United States. The government naturally impounded a few German businesses, but these were very quickly returned to their owners.

When Nazism collapsed, Perón wanted to import German technicians *en masse* so they could contribute to his country's development. He gathered a group of former collaborators and war criminals: a leader of the Belgian Rexist (Nazi) Party, Pierre Daye; a leader of the Flemish SS, René Lagrou; and a businessman and former SS *Hauptsturmführer* (captain), Carlos Fuldner. These three men, directed by the head of the Argentine intelligence services, organised the escape of war criminals with help from Draganović.

In order to improve the organisation of the Argentine channel, Perón decided to send a man of the Church to open an immigration office in Rome in December 1946, called DAIE (Delegation for Argentine Immigration in Europe). The military chaplain José Clemente Silva, who was the brother of General Oscar Silva, a figure close to the dictator, appeared to be the man for the job. He was given the task of organising mass European emigration with a target of four million people, at a rate of 30 000 migrants per month. This target was never reached, but the system worked flat out. Those in charge of the office welcoming the arrivals in the port at Buenos Aires learnt to pick out the "special" migrants by a simple look; these were then separated from the other migrants as soon as they came off the boat. The officials adopted the Allied services' terminology to distinguish the "blacks" (war criminals, *a priori* indefensible), the "greys" (collaborationists) and the "whites" (Jews and other war victims). The Americans and the British were perfectly aware of this channel and even mentioned it in internal documents.

The Vatican's involvement at the highest level was revealed quite clearly by the Argentine records and has since been confirmed by the American and British archives. Father Robert Graham's criticism of Mark Aarons and John Loftus's pioneering account of Draganović ("It was his own operation, not that of the Vatican") is no longer true. Pius XII not only "knew" more or less vaguely about the help given to Nazi war criminals: he expressly pleaded with the British and the American services in writing for them to be helped. On their side, the Americans were not long in recruiting Draganović for their own needs. After some hesitation, everybody agreed to shelter them from the Communist services.

In August 1945, the Vatican asked Britain, through its ambassador Sir D'Arcy Osborne, to "reconsider" 600 Croats held in Naples and reclassify them as "prisoners of war" so that "in no way could they or their

compatriots be handed over to Marshal Tito's government".[22] This request was rejected by the British government. On 27 March 1946, the Pope tried again directly (and not through the Secretariat of State) to intercede in favour of the Croats held in the Tarente camp, who were threatened with being repatriated to Yugoslavia.[23] He fully supported the request made by the Confraternity of San Girolamo (i.e. Father Draganović).

Indignant at the situation, the British diplomats thought that the Croatian prisoners should be handed over to Tito, or that those hiding in Rome should be captured. Osborne pleaded for the residences belonging to the Vatican not to be searched, proof that such a step had been seriously considered. "If those men were anywhere in Italy other than in the Vatican, they would be arrested and handed over," a Foreign Office official fumed. Osborne was instructed to warn the people he spoke to that the Vatican was being perceived more and more as the protector of Nazis and Fascists. In January 1947, Osborne therefore handed over a confidential memorandum to the Under-Secretary of State, Cardinal Tardini. He warned Tardini that Yugoslavia was getting ready to ask for the extradition of five major war criminals, of whose guilt the British had no doubts. He added that it was high time that the Vatican stopped furnishing ammunition to those who thought the Holy See was protecting Hitler's and Mussolini's former agents. Tardini answered that the "Pope had recently given very strict orders to all Roman ecclesiastical institutions not to take in anybody without authorisation from the highest level".

The following month, Tardini met with Osborne to tell him that the five criminals being sought were no longer sheltered in the Pontifical Oriental Institute. Embarrassment only increased meanwhile, because the Yugoslavs declared publicly that a large number of war criminals were being moved to Argentina at the instigation of San Girolamo, with the help of the Pontifical Assistance Commission, in violation of all United Nations conventions. Tardini pleaded that the commission was completely independent of the Secretariat of State. Osborne simply commented: "I remarked to him that it was nonetheless an organisation and an instrument of papal charity and that one couldn't be absolved from being responsible for its actions."

Without letting up, Pius XII sent a new demand on 26 April 1947 in favour of fifteen Ustasha (among whom were Generals Kren and Moškov, Pavelic's right-hand men) held in a British military prison in Rome. The

British decided to disregard instructions and handed them over to the Yugoslavs (only nine of them in fact, as several managed to get away). Osborne received instructions to inform the Vatican drily: “Explain to the Secretariat of State that whatever these men’s reputation was as ‘fervent advocates of humanitarian principles’ (alleged by Pius XII), they had actively supported the German invasion of Croatia and worked for Pavelić’s Ustasha government, supporting a regime which had trampled over humanitarian principles and committed atrocities without parallel in any period of history”.[24]

Even so, the tension between London and Rome subsided even more quickly than it had risen. In the wings, there were secret discussions between the Americans, the British and the Vatican. The Cold War was beginning to set in, and this altered the order of priorities somewhat. The three governments agreed that not a single Ustasha was to be handed over to the Yugoslavs and that all of them could go to Argentina. On 9 September 1947, a joint Anglo-American operation enabled all those still held or sheltered in Italy to be taken to the British occupation zone in West Germany. No further demands for extradition were accepted. The American Catholic Church, in particular Cardinal Spellman, did a lot of lobbying with its government. The British ambassador in Washington warned London that the Yugoslav lobby was putting increasing pressure on Congress and the State Department and that it would be better to avoid stepping out of line.

According to Uki Goñi,[25] Draganović acted all the time under the protection of Cardinal Pietro Fumasoni Biondi, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, which housed the Vatican secret service (this was only partly true) and which dealt with the file on Yugoslavia. Another person in charge of intelligence was Cardinal Angelo Dell’Acqua, Draganović’s superior and a highly placed official in the Secretariat of State.

The American services knew that Draganović had received large sums from Hudal in exchange for his emigration services to the Nazis on their way to Argentina. The Hudal and Draganović channels were therefore not hermetically separated, and both worked with Cardinal Siri in Genoa.

The Franciscan friar Dominik Mandić was an important cog in the Draganović organisation. This fervent supporter of Pavelić had arrived in Rome in 1939 as the treasurer of his order. In San Girolamo, he created

false identity cards using the Franciscans' printing equipment. He was Draganović's treasurer too, receiving gifts from the American-Croat community sent by Spellman, as well as those coming from the Vatican itself. In addition, he invested the gold, jewels and securities which had been given to him by the high-ranking Ustasha, the remains of the war treasure brought to Rome by Pavelić's troops. Part of this treasure went to finance the Ustasha secret service after the war, which collaborated with the CIA and the Vatican. In Rome, Pavelić's son-in-law General Vilko Pečnikar was in charge of European affairs. According to the CIA, Father Mandič granted extra finance to the Ustasha service in exchange for information from the Eastern bloc.[26] The Western services didn't just go along with things or cooperate: they made use of the Vatican agents to serve their own objectives. Among which, in prime place, was the ability to infiltrate experienced agents into Communist Yugoslavia to gather information and achieve its strategic goals. Aarons and Loftus have established that the British and Americans made an agreement with the Holy See in order to help a large number of Nazi collaborators quit Europe using the Draganović network. The Vatican was the respectable cover behind which they could shelter. For his part, the American Angleton, in exchange for financial aid, made sure some of his "recruits" benefited from the Draganović network. A CIA agent described the scheme candidly: "This agreement consists of simply mutual assistance, i.e. these agents assist persons of interest to Father Draganović to leave Germany and, in turn, Father Draganović will assist agents in obtaining the necessary visas to Argentina, South America, for persons of interest to this Command … This operation cannot receive any official approval and must be handled with minimum amount of delay and with a minimum amount of general knowledge."[27]

Up till 1948, the Allied services and the Vatican were hoping that the Ustasha would be able to overthrow Tito's regime. This is why they showed such an accommodating attitude towards them. But this hope faded very quickly. During the summer of 1948, a show trial of 57 Ustasha "terrorists" was held in Zagreb. They had infiltrated the country during the previous two years in order to destabilise the regime by means of assassination and attacks on the railways and other means of communication. Most of them had fallen into the hands of the police only hours after their arrival.

The trials enabled the regime to denounce the duplicity of the Vatican, which it accused of trying to overthrow the regime. The reality was a bit more complex: it was an international co-production. The British secret services supplied a lot of logistical support: the planes dropping pro-Pavelić pamphlets into Croatian territory took off from airports located in the British zone in Austria. The Ustasha soldiers benefited from using British military equipment. According to an American intelligence report, this material was supplied via Switzerland and the operation's command centre was situated in the Vatican. The Slovene clerics Mgrs Janez Krek and Anton Prešeren, representing the Slovene clerical party hired by the British services, were Draganović's most faithful allies in the Vatican. They declared that they too had guerrilla commandos ready to go into action.

A former British agent who served in Trieste after the war tells how he created an anti-communist cell made up of British officers in collusion with the American services and the Italian police. Their mission was to watch over Yugoslav clandestine operations. The "Free Territory of Trieste" was then the meeting place for resistance forces operating on Yugoslav territory and those who financed them and directed them from Italian territory. The main coordinator of the infiltrated Croats, Ivan Protulipac, who was close to Pavelić and who founded in the 1930s the Krizari (Crusaders) Group, was assassinated by Eastern bloc services at the end of 1946.

To help the Krizari cross the Yugoslav border, black market traffickers were used; they doubtless had no hesitation in betraying their charges and in being paid by both sides. Apart from this weak point in the set-up, it is likely that the Krizari were betrayed by one or more double agents because most of the clandestine missions carried out in Yugoslav territory led to disaster. Evidence presented by Yugoslav justice officials at the 1948 trial left few doubts on this score.

Intermarium

Another Catholic organisation became involved in the escape routes: Intermarium. According to the historian Christopher Simpson,[28] it actively helped Nazi fugitives. Draganović was on its executive committee.

After the war, with the support of the Vatican, several countries (Italy, France, and Great Britain) thought they could use it to subvert the

Communist Eastern bloc regimes and try to promote a political confederation of Danube countries.

Intermarium was a secret organisation created in Paris at the beginning of the 1920s, at the instigation of White Russians. Its aim was to bring together sixteen nations located between Germany and Russia so as to form an anti-communist confederation, Catholic of course. Before the war, Intermarium had received support from the French and British secret services, which looked favourably at the prospect of setting up a cordon sanitaire to contain German and Russian ambitions. In 1939, most Intermarium leaders were involved on the Nazi side. After the war, they got in touch again with their former Anglo-French sponsors, hoping to escape justice.

The CIC's special agent Gowen investigated Intermarium by following the trail of a young Hungarian, Ferenc Vajta, who was well connected at the highest level of the Vatican. He lived in a monastery near Rome. Vajta, when interrogated by Gowen, told him that he worked for both the French and British services, with the support of the Vatican.

As a Francophile, he had studied at the Sorbonne in the 1930s, before becoming an agent for the Hungarian secret services. During the war, he distinguished himself as a Nazi propagandist, working for several newspapers financed by the Germans. At the end of the war, as Consul General of Hungary in Vienna, he organised the dismantling and transfer to Germany of a number of factories located in his country. He also enabled a number of industrialists to escape the Russians. Spotted by French military intelligence in the French occupation zone in Austria, he was recruited by them and even claimed to have met de Gaulle in Paris in 1945 (the archives cannot confirm this). He showed that he was in favour of restoring French influence in Eastern Europe, by cultivating friendships with local émigré groups wanting to obtain positions of importance in their own country. With the support of the Second Bureau and the French General Staff's military intelligence, Vajta set up intelligence offices in Innsbruck, Freiburg and Paris: "the émigrés could move around in total safety and set up very elaborate intelligence networks". Vajta also claimed that de Gaulle at the time had undertaken to develop close relations with the Holy See, his objective being "to collaborate with the Church and to be sustained by the Vatican in the struggle for the Europe of tomorrow. He knew too well that France alone was strong enough to play the [trump] cards."[29] It was of

course through the intervention of Cardinal Tisserant that this cooperation was effected: he was the first to sound out the Pope about the collaboration envisaged by the French.

While working with the French, Vajta also put himself at the disposal of the British, whose aims were similar. In 1944, Churchill founded the Central European Committee, whose aim was to create a confederation of Central European states which would obviously be placed under British influence. MI6 tried in turn to recruit émigrés to serve these designs. Despite an offer of collaboration from the French, it became quickly clear that the British were more resolute and more efficient and had acquired resources that the French didn't have. According to Vajta, MI6 had more than 200 agents working in the Central European zone in the summer of 1945, and had no misgivings about recruiting former Ustasha members or Nazis.

Thanks to its British sponsor, Intermarium had funds for the large-scale distribution of propaganda pamphlets in the displaced persons' camps in Italy. Having become one of the organisation's directors, Vajta published two books and swamped the French general staff and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with memos and plans of clandestine action in the Balkans. But he ended up squabbling with his French sponsors and decided to settle in Rome, where he renewed direct links with the Vatican and the political leaders he had known before the war, when he was a press correspondent in the Italian capital. In Rome, Father Draganović was an ardent ambassador for Intermarium.

Draganović's lay right-hand man, Miha Krek, was a Slovene and friend of Vajta. He was head of the Slovene Catholic Party; he had signed up with MI6 and worked as president of Intermarium. He gained access to the Vatican by the intercession of his compatriot Mgr Prešeren, the Slovene assistant of the Superior General of the Jesuits. The Italian intelligence services considered Prešeren the leader of a powerful Slovene lobby, supported by the British services.

Within Intermarium a number of fascists who had passed into the service of the British were discovered: Grigore Gafencu, the Romanian ex-minister of foreign affairs; Casimir Papée, Polish ambassador to the Vatican; Mgr Ivan Bučko, the Vatican's expert on Ukrainian affairs, known as the "spiritual head of the Ukrainian resistance movement"; and Ferdinand Ďurčansky, Slovak ex-minister of foreign affairs, who was

wanted for war crimes. Prešeren and Bučko worked in clandestine emigration assistance groups supported by the Vatican.

From his home in Rome, Vajta collaborated with the Jesuits, whom he described as “the main Vatican agents for infiltrating countries occupied by the communists”. He also negotiated with the Christian Democrat leaders for his Hungarian industrialist friends to transfer their factories to Italy. However, when he returned from a trip to Spain in April 1947, he was arrested by the Italian police and charged with war crimes, at the instigation of the Hungarian authorities. He was freed two weeks later thanks to his political friends.

Impressed by Vajta’s potential, US special agent Gowen, whose job it was to trail Nazis, completely changed his attitude as far as Vajta was concerned. He suggested he be recruited and that Intermarium be salvaged by American intelligence.

To help Vajta escape Italian justice, which carried on pursuing him, his friends proposed sheltering him in Castel Gandolfo, the village that housed the Pope’s summer residence. The prime minister, Alcide De Gasperi, personally followed the file. Given the green light by his bosses, Gowen organised Vajta’s exfiltration to Spain. There he undertook to create a rival group to Intermarium (which he thought the Soviets had infiltrated): the Continental Union, which would operate under American control. With Franco’s approval and with help from the apostolic nuncio in Spain, Madrid became the new hub for Eastern European emigration. After having worked for a time for the French SDECE (foreign intelligence agency), Vajta skilfully “sold” himself to the Americans. But he imprudently went to the United States, where, in particular, he wanted to meet Cardinal Spellman and several exiled leaders. Two journalists revealed his identity and put the American government in an embarrassing situation. There was nothing left for them but arrest Vajta and expel him (though there was no question of handing him over to the Hungarians, as the latter wished). With the Vatican’s intervention, Vajta was expelled to Colombia and found another job there in a college as a teacher.

According to the American archives, it appears that the Austrian government supported the Vatican’s project for restoring the Intermarium. The link with the Holy See for Austria was Kurt Waldheim. A former officer decorated by Pavelić, Kurt Waldheim managed to have his military past cleared by Allen Dulles’s services and was able to enter the Austrian

diplomatic corps. His past was exposed when he became the United Nations Secretary General and then a presidential candidate in the Austrian elections in 1985. One wonders why the communist countries, knowing perfectly well about his past, not only let him obtain the post at the UN but even voted for him. Maybe they were satisfied they had a good way of putting pressure on him by threatening to reveal his past.

Intermarium furnished the CIA with a number of recruits within the Eastern bloc, as it did the West German BND (the foreign intelligence agency). The most spectacular Intermarium coup was saving an entire Ukrainian Waffen-SS division, or 11 000 people (soldiers with their families), held in Rimini camp. Archbishop Bučko pleaded their cause, that they should not be handed over to Stalin as the latter wished, but be allowed to emigrate to various Commonwealth countries. At the beginning of 1947, the Red Cross agreed to issue them with travel documents. The American and British secret services naturally had plans for the best elements in this SS division: they had the ideal profile for carrying out guerrilla warfare throughout the Eastern bloc.

According to a series of inquiries published in a Yugoslav magazine in 1986, the Yugoslav secret police had succeeded in implanting an agent, Miroslav Varoš, in Draganović's entourage, who reached Rome in 1943, a short while after Draganović. Draganović remained a perfectly respectable clergyman until the end of the 1950s. Because of his policy of openness to the East, Pope John XXIII was obliged to exile him from the Croatian College so as to mollify the Tito regime. This exile was not too unkind since Draganović settled in private accommodation. The date of this move leaves no doubt about Pius XII's responsibility for his activities.

As far as the American services were concerned, Draganović was too valuable a person to be retired. In 1947, he received financial support from military intelligence for his exfiltration channel. In exchange for their indulgence towards him, Draganović was asked to help the CIC in assisting the emigration of some "individuals that its headquarters find interesting" and who "interest also their Russian allies". This operation could not be supported officially and had to be carried out with the greatest discretion.

In 1959, Draganović was recruited as an informer by the CIA but was no longer able to supply major information about Yugoslavia because he hadn't set foot there since 1943. He disappeared from sight, then resurfaced in 1967 in Sarajevo. He declared that he had returned to his country

voluntarily, and was willing to cooperate with the authorities. Either he had been kidnapped by the Yugoslav authorities, or he had been homesick and negotiated his return to a peaceful retirement in his birthplace, in exchange for a voluntary confession. He was not imprisoned and finished his days in 1983, without being heard of again.

* * *

The historiographical debate which raged in the 1980s and 1990s about the involvement of the Pope and his right-hand man, Montini, seems to us to be mainly settled. There are too many traces in the archives (British, American, Argentine, etc.) of their written intervention on behalf of certain protégés of Hudal and Draganović, for one to still believe that everything that took place was the sole responsibility of extremist and marginal priests. To claim that Hudal and Draganović were able to work unrestricted for several years shows a lack of knowledge as to how the Curia worked. And it would be underestimating Pacelli to believe he was ignorant of what was going on when, from 1944 onwards, he himself filled the role of Secretary of State, keeping himself informed of everything and holding his administration on a very short leash.

It is paradoxical, but there was no hint of accommodation with Nazism: it was at first cold calculation and fierce anti-communism which entirely governed the Vatican's strategy. The case of Cardinal Eugène Tisserant provides a good example. In May 1942, he denounced to the Holy Father the massacre of Serbs and Orthodox priests carried out in Croatia by the Pavelić regime. He was not listened to. Nonetheless, in 1943, Tisserant the anti-fascist started to help French collaborators flee to Argentina. He used traditional arguments like the right to claim asylum from the Church, which criminals themselves had benefited from in the Middle Ages. Above all, he underplayed their responsibility. "No doubt", he conceded, "there were a few criminals among them, and I have no intention of letting them escape their fate, if they are legitimately condemned and have to be legally extradited […] Some of them have been taken in by the Maréchal's [Pétain's] legend, entered his service, followed him to Sigmaringen […] Others were attacked by communists and did not believe they'd be able to escape just by going to work in Germany […] I believe it's my duty to help these people, pursued implacably by the communists employing NKVD

methods, operating over here using actual kidnapping thanks to the complicity of bribed policemen."[30]

Tisserant took these people under his wing, people who, one or two years earlier, he himself would have considered hardly respectable, including the "collaborators" whom the French police were pursuing right into Italy. He thus helped Mgr Giulio Penitenti, an Italian ex-military chaplain in Russia, to take in several hundreds of refugees in a villa in Rome. Wholly committed to the defence of Eastern Catholics, Tisserant even started to think that French refugees in Italy were more victims than guilty criminals. As the safety of these fleeing refugees was not guaranteed in Italy, the cardinal turned to the Argentine religious and civilian authorities.

On 18 January 1946, Antonio Caggiano, the Bishop of Rosario and the head of the Argentine Catholic Action, left for Rome, where Pius XII was to make him a cardinal. Catholic Action had a lot of members, including some leading members of the Perón regime, to which it was close. He was accompanied by the old Bishop of Tucumán, Agustín Barrère, a fierce anti-communist who had had been in contact with the far-right movement Action Française for a long time. During a stopover in Genoa, the two bishops were looked after by the Argentine consul, Aquilino Lopez, who took them to Rome. During the war, Lopez, based in Madrid, had collaborated with the Nazi secret services.

The Argentine bishops met Tisserant and proposed looking after the French fugitives. They pleaded with him to develop a pool of anti-communist experts in Argentina, which it would be possible to use in case Europe was taken over by the communists. The Argentine Embassy served as a hub which recognised and authorised the "reported cases" of tourists who went to visit Argentina using Red Cross passports with no return ticket.[31] A parallel channel was set up by Mgr Caggiano in Spain, which helped other French war criminals, like Émile Dewoitine, the aircraft manufacturer wanted for providing intelligence to the enemy, who put his skills at the disposal of the Argentine Army.

For the Vatican, the Cold War was not a distant threat. It had already started in the 1930s and it was the Russians who won the first round. The Vatican had no intention of losing the second.

5

NO HOLDS BARRED, 1949–1958

Autumn 1949. Somewhere in West Germany, a C-47 took off from an American military airfield and headed eastwards. Aboard were young men each carrying a parachute and a travelling bag. The plane flew over East Germany at a high altitude, then Poland. It was picked up by the Soviets. Without any problem, it entered Ukrainian airspace and started its descent. At 650 ft above ground a light went on and the parachutists threw themselves into space. The plane climbed immediately and resumed its route south-westwards.

Two members of the commando came from the Ukrainian national resistance movement. They had made a long journey from the Carpathian Mountains to West Germany. They had been debriefed by the CIA, then followed a ten-month intensive training course as radio operators and intelligence agents. They had now been given the task of returning to their underground movement. Four days after their drop, they were to call their chiefs by radio to tell them they'd arrived. Two others were priests.

The Russians attack the Russicum

From September 1949 onwards and following more or less this same pattern, the CIA developed a penetration programme enabling them to

infiltrate agents into the Ukraine as well as into the USSR.[1] The Russicum took advantage of this channel to send some of its agents. Every year several dozen parachutists from among its ranks would disappear behind the Iron Curtain, equipped with radio sets. A careless report made by the *Corriere della Sera*[2] lifted part of the veil on these James Bonds in cassocks: "The missionaries who come from the Russicum must have a good knowledge of Russia, before the revolution and after it; they have to be keen on sociology, have the gift of the gab and be persuasive. This is what Father Wetter told me. But he didn't want to say anything about the very well-equipped sports halls located within the Institute, nor say anything about the exhausting physical preparation the students were put through so they could face any situation. All-in wrestling, athletics, open combat, firearms training and, perhaps, parachuting were not minor but major subjects for the Russicum missionaries' training."

The CIA, and likewise MI6 and the SDECE, subsidised the Russian pontifical college, directed by the Austrian Father Gustav Wetter. His predecessor, Father Vandelino Javorka, had been listed as missing: he never returned from a mission to the Eastern bloc. From then on the Russicum became, for the Western secret services, a full-time partner. It was understood that the organisation was run by the Jesuits, who were the most committed in the struggle against Moscow. As early as 1945, American military intelligence paid this plaudit: "Until now, the only positive measure taken by the Vatican has been to organize an infiltration program consisting of sending particularly able agents, Jesuits mostly, into such and such a region, so as to structure and comfort the Catholic elements there and, showing exemplary zeal, to prevent them from becoming discouraged."[3]

The Russicum was described by the French intelligence service as "a Jesuit organisation, a true 'Action Division', aimed at the East".[4] In Paris, the Assistant General of the Jesuits, Father Bernard de Gorostarzu, was the liaison officer for the French and American services. Cardinal Tisserant trusted him implicitly. The French secret services played their own game in the infiltration programme in the East. It must be said that their agents working in the French embassies were constantly harassed by the Eastern bloc services, which even went so far as to murder over-curious agents. The SDECE supported underground networks being set up and developed. The French also cooperated with the Vatican in their operations in the East,

concentrating especially on Bulgaria and Poland. The Vatican agreed to lend a strong hand in these territories, in exchange for financial and logistics support for its own operations. Other SDECE agents working in the Eastern bloc countries were in touch with underground priests. One of these secret emissaries was Father Yves-Marc Dubois, who will be encountered later.

Apart from the Ukraine, there were no carefully arranged drop zones in the USSR. The Western security services were completely in the dark as to what was going on. The CIA lacked even the simplest information about roads, bridges, where factories or military bases were located, and so on. Small bits of information were gleaned by interrogating refugees from Eastern Europe, Soviet POWs who had not been sent back home yet, former German POWs returning from Russia, and a few deserters. The American Embassy in Moscow was totally isolated and its personnel very closely watched whenever they left it. It was therefore in the interest of the Americans to help the Vatican re-establish its underground priests: they would perhaps have more luck getting information out to the West.

Preparing identity papers was one of the most tricky of all the logistical challenges in operations of this sort. Once on the other side, the priest had to go unseen by the local people. Society in the USSR at the time was very closely controlled. The KGB's job was one of tracking down spies and dissidents, and the police frequently checked people's identities, especially at railway stations. The local population had been "trained" to be wary of people they didn't know, who might be provocateurs, sent there to test their loyalty. Identity cards and passports were renewed every five years and differed from one Soviet republic to another, not to mention other documents which could be required in case of an identity check: a work booklet, military booklet, party booklet. Preparing false papers therefore required a large range of up-to-date examples and an in-depth knowledge of the local context. The CIA forgers (who lent the Russicum teams a helping hand) chose very often to give their agents an invented origin from towns whose archives had been burned during the war, so that false addresses or dates of birth could not be checked in the event of a police inquiry. The biggest part of the Russicum's work was to develop narratives that were as thorough as possible: the infiltrated priest had to be able to speak at length about his past without making any mistakes. For that, there were instructors

of different national languages, speaking perfect Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian and so on.

Between 1949 and 1953, the USSR launched a large campaign to get rid of all false papers by revalidating all passports. Each Soviet citizen had to present a living witness who could identify him or her before being registered. Now, the stock of unused passports the CIA used came from the German archives seized at the end of the war. Because of this, it was almost impossible from 1953–4 onwards to infiltrate agents using this method. The main reason that the programme stopped, however, was that the infiltrated agents were being slaughtered.

We now know that before the Tito–Stalin split in 1948, Soviet agents arrived in Italy via Trieste. In Rome they were introduced as Catholic priests fleeing the "popular democracies". The Vatican provided them with housing and money. Some of them were even given posts in the Holy See administration. Others entered the Russicum, with results one can imagine. One has also to bear in mind that part of the strength of the post-war European secret services came from the resistance networks. Within these anti-Nazi networks, there had been no prior identification of those who might have had communist sympathies. Operation Minos, run by the French, which involved training émigrés from the Eastern bloc in parachuting and guerrilla skills, thus turned into a disaster because the team included a "mole": a pilot from the Normandie-Niemen air force squadron who informed the KGB.[5]

Another weak point was that the Western services recruited Catholic groups to destabilise or even overthrow the Eastern bloc regimes—in Czechoslovakia, the Baltic States and Poland. All their activities there turned into a fiasco. Ever since the last months of the war, the KGB and the GRU (Soviet military intelligence) had methodically infiltrated the émigré circles, thus enabling them to undermine the movements the West backed. One example among others was when, as early as the 1920s, Soviet military intelligence recruited a very special agent: after the war Anton Vasilievich Turkul worked for the Gehlen[6] intelligence organisation in West Germany, the American services (CIC, then CIA) and the Vatican services, while all the time reporting back to the GRU.

Prince Turkul (he was a noble) started his career as an officer in a Cossack unit; then, during the Russian Civil War, played a double game in

the service of the communists. When the latter won, he went with other White Russian officers to Paris, where they plotted to restore the Tsarist monarchy, in a service called “the Secret League”. This émigré group’s initiatives all failed, which contributed to making Turkul suspect within the White Russian community. Several Tsarist leaders like Kutiepov were kidnapped or killed in the middle of Paris. In spite of all this, Turkul became accepted, in the eyes of Western intelligence services, as a leader of the young anti-communist guard. The British MI6 called on him, as did the French Second Bureau. Understandably Turkul soon joined Intermarium. And Admiral Canaris’s Abwehr was also interested in him. The portrait would not be complete if we didn’t indicate that Turkul, who had good business sense, also sold information about the White Russians to the Japanese.

According to a report from the American intelligence services, Turkul settled in Berlin in 1938 in order to run a group of White Russians whose task it was to enter and leave Russia clandestinely. His network was so valuable that only a few high-level German officials knew of its existence. A short while before the war began, Turkul received orders from the GRU to go and settle in Rome. His contacts with Intermarium would enable him to get in touch with the Jesuits, who were trying to infiltrate priests into the Soviet Union. Turkul was going to recruit Ukrainian priests for his “anti-Soviet” network.

Canaris ordered the Turkul group to be integrated into the Fremde Heere Ost (FHO, or German Military Intelligence on the Eastern Front) under General Gehlen. It is thought today that Turkul was the source who transmitted the German battle plans to the Soviets through the Lucy network in Switzerland, thus contributing decisively to Germany’s defeat in the East. In spite of all these exploits, Turkul recycled himself after the war, reactivated his contacts in the Vatican and became a counsellor at the Russicum, with results that we already know.

Even today, what we know of the degree of Soviet penetration within the Allied services remains incomplete. In 1959, NATO intelligence services, in a file summarising the many failed anti-Soviet operations, concluded that the émigré organisations backing these operations had all been infiltrated by the Soviet services. They drew up a list of various moles, including Turkul, recognising that it couldn’t be exhaustive. Allen Dulles

did everything to suppress the affair, which threatened to tarnish his reputation. As head of the CIA, he had the means to do so.

The secret war of the Ukrainian Uniates

The Ukraine was decidedly one of the hottest spots in this secret war. From the Vatican's point of view, it was a rather special case because of the Uniate rite, which the rest of Christianity knows little about. The Uniates are Orthodox Christians who follow the Slavonic liturgy but recognise Rome's authority. This peculiarity was the result of a compromise devised in the 16th century by the Jesuits and encouraged by the Austrian Habsburg dynasty to counter the influence of Orthodox Russia. So, in the Ukraine, there existed:

– A Greek Orthodox rite practised in Galicia by 3.5 million Catholics, formerly Orthodox but who rallied to Rome in 1596, hence the name Uniates. Their headquarters were in Lvov.
– An archdeaconry following the Latin rite whose headquarters were also in Lvov but which was attached to the Polish Church.
– A bishopric of the Russian Orthodox Church (which was in the minority).

The leader of the Uniates was the Metropolitan Sheptytsky, the Archbishop of Lvov. He supported the pro-Nazi puppet government installed by the Ukrainian Nationalist Organisation (UNO). Less than a year after the Ukraine was invaded, suffering huge losses, the SS authorised the incorporation of Ukrainians as the "Galicia" Division within its ranks. This supplied the SS with 20 000 young recruits, mainly ex-police auxiliaries who had taken part in eradicating the Ukrainian Jews. Mgr Sheptytsky gave them his blessing. The division was severely mauled in 1944 during the Battle of Brody.

What was left of the SS Uniate forces moved at the end of the war towards Austria, to the British occupation zone. The Galicia Division was the only one to surrender intact, with all its weapons and still commanded by its officers. It was sent to a camp at Rimini. On 11 August 1945, the Vatican State Secretariat addressed a note to the American government asking for an apostolic visitor to be allowed to visit these Ruthenian

Catholics, and appealing against their extradition on the grounds that they were not legally Russian soldiers at all, because in 1939 they had Polish nationality. After the Americans refused, several notes were exchanged and a lobbying campaign was undertaken by the Bishop of Pittsburgh, Mgr Constantine Bohachevsky, and by the inevitable Cardinal Spellman.

Finally, in January 1946, the State Department agreed to modify its expulsion rules in favour of the Ukrainians. Most of the troops (about 8 000 men) remained stationed at Rimini until 1947. The British authorities, who had to hand the camp back to the Italians, decided to transfer the prisoners to Britain. They were taken to an army camp, where MI6 appeared and did its shopping, recruiting members of the former Ukrainian pro-fascist government. It was true that before the war their leader, Stepan Bandera, had already been recruited by the British s. In the mind of the British services, these recruits were to join the vast bloc of anti-Bolshevik nations, alongside Intermarium, the Ustasha Krizari and other factions.

The support of the Vatican in saving the Ukrainian SS seems to have been obtained, under pressure from the British, as a result of Mgr Bučko's constant lobbying in Rome—he was an agent of the British services and Intermarium's Ukrainian delegate. With his help, the Ukrainian SS were able to emigrate to Canada and Australia. Some of them became reservists in the secret war against communism.

Thanks to its moles within Intermarium, the escape routes and also the British secret services, the Soviet Ministry of State Security (ex-NKVD and future KGB) was perfectly well aware of what was going on. Indeed the leader of the anti-Bolshevik bloc of nations was a certain Kim Philby, one of the "Cambridge five" group of spies. These Englishmen had been recruited by the Russian service well before they started their careers. Not only did Philby support and promote other Soviet moles infiltrated in Intermarium, but he also went through their files, carefully removing any suspicious comments. The Slovak Ďurčansky and the Ukrainian Stepan Bandera were thus given the job of recruiting new agents for clandestine anti-Soviet operations from "their" men—all destined to fail.

Upon their return to Galicia in 1944, the Soviets, wanting to improve their image with their Western allies, started a policy of extending a "helping hand" and left the services to continue normally. The First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Nikita Khrushchev, even

attended Sheptytsky's funeral at the end of 1944. The Metropolitan was replaced by Mgr Josyf Slipyj.

In the spring of 1945, with the end of the war approaching, the attacks on the Uniate hierarchy started again. In April, the NKVD arrested all the bishops, who were sentenced to forced labour, then the canons, the superiors of the seminaries, and so on. The seminarians were dragooned into the army by force. A few weeks later, a "group initiating the unification of the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church to the Orthodox Church", which was the only authority of the Uniate Church officially recognised, was established "spontaneously", and the Patriarch of Moscow proclaimed himself the supreme head of the Uniates. The NKVD harassed the Uniate priests so that they'd recognise their "historic mistake"—the transferral of their church into the Catholic camp. Those who resisted were imprisoned. In 1946, a synod ratified the Orthodox "return to the fold". Out of a total of 2 500 priests, about 1 500 remained faithful to Rome, however. Some were imprisoned; others went underground, joining the UPA, or the Ukrainian Popular Army, resisting the Sovietisation of the Ukraine until 1950. Religious services continued to take place in secret.

In a diocese of sub-Carpathian Ukraine, now also under Soviet control, where the population was of Uniate confession, the Russian Orthodox Church appointed a bishop, a rival of the authority already there, Mgr Theodore Romzha. The people remained faithful to Romzha. So, in October 1947, the Soviet Ministry of State Security decided to get rid of Romzha once and for all: a bus ran into his carriage, but he survived. Cared for in hospital, he nonetheless died mysteriously, no doubt poisoned. At the beginning of 1949, all the Uniate churches were closed, the Uniate rite was forbidden, and the bishop imposed by Moscow now had sole authority over the clergy.

Fifty nuances of repression

What happened in the Eastern bloc countries followed an overall plan, even if each country had its peculiarities.[7] At the end of World War II, Stalin created a State Council for Orthodox Affairs, whose co-president, alongside the Patriarch Sergeï, was Georgi G. Karpov, an NKVD officer. Given the

task of overseeing international affairs was the Metropolitan Nicolas, who was also an intelligence officer.[8]

Looking to the international sphere, the NKVD created the Orginform and placed it under the leadership of Captain Vassili Gorelov, a former priest who had rallied to the side of the Bolsheviks during the Revolution. Its structure was based on that of the Comintern and it dealt with religious affairs in all the communist countries. Its agents operated from USSR embassies in friendly countries. Gorelov also looked after the "religious" training schools for officers who had been given the job of infiltrating non-communist countries.[9] A school based in Lvov, Poland, trained faux Catholic priests for infiltrating the Vatican.

The Uniates living in Romania were persecuted just as much there as they were in the Ukraine: "The Catholic Church is the last organised barrier against establishing a popular democracy in Romania once and for all," said Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, secretary of the Romanian Workers' Party in February 1948. In August 1948, Romania denounced the Concordat signed with Rome in 1939. The six Uniate bishops were dismissed from their positions and put under house arrest. The Romanian secret police put pressure on all the priests so they would vote for incorporation with the Orthodox. Some were tortured. The Romanian Catholic Church, following the Latin rite, was next in line.

In Poland, where the Catholic Church predominated, it was another kettle of fish altogether. This was all the more so—such is the irony of history—because shifting Poland's eastern border, to the USSR's advantage, removed some five million Orthodox people from Poland, turning them into Soviet citizens, which reinforced the crushing numerical superiority of the Catholics within Poland. The usual attempts to reduce the influence of the Polish clergy (making teaching secular, confiscating Church possessions, and so on) ran into strong opposition. In 1950, the UB—the Polish secret police—carried out an operation against the Caritas organisation, which helped refugees and war victims: as it received American funds, it was accused of being an espionage centre in American service. Between 1945 and 1953, seven bishops were imprisoned, including the new Cardinal Primate of Warsaw.

In 1948, Stefan Wyszyński, who had become Bishop of Warsaw, was convinced it was possible to confront the authorities and negotiate a

compromise. On 14 April 1950, an “understanding” was indeed signed, surprising Rome as much as it did Moscow. But in 1953, after publicly criticising a decree by which the authorities tried to control the nomination of bishops, Wyszyński was arrested.

During the 1945–53 period, 2 200 Polish priests were imprisoned, deported or killed. But the people stood by their clergy. So it was decided to change tactics. A thaw in the regime enabled Wyszyński to be freed and a new agreement was negotiated with him, signed in 1956.

The Polish services themselves placed great importance on penetrating the Catholic Church in order to get at the Western churches through it. In order to do this, they used a rather strange character. During the war, Bolesław Piasecki had unfortunately become notorious as the leader of the Falanga, the right-wing Polish youth movement affiliated to the Nazis. Captured by the Red Army in 1944 and sentenced to death, he was not executed and he reappeared in Warsaw after the war, looking fit and living in some style. He started a chemical products business fairly quickly. How could this be possible? Piasecki had, very simply, become an agent for the Russian security services. It must be said that he didn’t have much choice. The whole affair was revealed by Erwin Weit, one-time interpreter for Gomułka, the First Secretary of the Polish Communist Party, who defected to the West in 1969, in a book of memoirs,[10] which revealed the objective of this conversion: “Before Cardinal Wyszyński was arrested, Piasecki had obtained permission to meet the head of the Church in Poland and talk to him. He recorded the conversation with a pocket recorder and handed the tape over to the security services. It was on the basis of this denunciation that Wyszyński was arrested. Piasecki and his collaborators had no qualms about corrupting or bribing certain men in the Catholic Church to make them more docile.”

Piasecki was the head of Operation Pax. This was a Catholic printing and publishing group whose members were in reality agents of the regime. To finance it, Piasecki obtained the monopoly for marketing liturgical objects. With the takings from this activity, he founded his group and developed it by buying up one by one all the Catholic newspapers and magazines that were still authorized by the regime.

According to Weit, the Polish tax office allowed Piasecki to conduct his own business without ever examining it. Pax employed 400 Polish priests

who were not all aware that the business was a front and run by the secret services, but who helped the machine to work, giving it a respectable facade. The organisation was responsible for welcoming all Western priests visiting Poland. They then went back with a very positive opinion of the relationship between the Church and the communist state.

Pax became the showcase for neo-modernists arguing the compatibility of Catholic precepts and certain aspects of Marxism. Their agents were to be found in the 1960s at work in Paris itself.

* * *

In Czechoslovakia, it was the hard line which prevailed. In 1949, the famous “K” plan was carried out, whereby all religious houses in the country were shut down in one night. A number of priests were seized and charged in a huge trial conducted against “Vatican spies”. In 1950, 2 000 brothers were sent to labour camps. The Catholic Eastern Rite diocese was suppressed and its 305 000 faithful declared Orthodox. With its hierarchy beheaded or deported, consecrations went underground. Gaetan Matousek was consecrated Assistant Bishop of Prague in secret.

Among the priests consecrated clandestinely was the Jesuit Pavel Hnilica, who became the apostolic administrator of Rožňava. One day in January 1951, the current bishop, who was in prison, pretended he needed to see a doctor. It was in fact Hnilica who arrived to see him. After his clandestine consecration in prison, the young Bishop Hnilica started his work with enthusiasm, but the authorities very quickly caught up with him. The only thing left for him to do was to consecrate another bishop as quickly as possible and quit the diocese.[11] Once settled in Rome, he devoted the remainder of his life to secret activity behind the Iron Curtain. He was to be found in the 1980s alongside Pope John Paul II, engaged in dangerous undertakings.

In Romania, underground bishops were also consecrated.[12] “I have something important to tell you,” declared Patrick O’Hara, the papal nuncio when finding himself alone with the priest Schubert from Bucharest and out of earshot of the secret police. The papal nuncio glanced at the clock: “This very night”, he continued, “I’m going to consecrate you bishop!” Schubert went pale: “But, Your Excellency! Even my nomination as apostolic

administrator here in Bucharest in May has not yet been approved by the government. If the authorities get wind of a consecration—and we won't be able to keep it secret for very long—I shall go to prison."

The papal nuncio, a vigorous American bishop straight from his Savannah, Georgia, diocese, looked at his alarmed companion, and then answered solemnly: "Well, then, you'll just go to prison as a bishop—the Church needs martyrs everywhere!"

A week later, accused of spying by the Romanian newspapers, O'Hara left the country, never to return. The Romanian authorities took the appointment of an American papal nuncio as a provocation and as proof that the Vatican had sold out to the Imperialists. All the bishops he'd nominated were arrested and imprisoned for eighteen years. Schubert was condemned to death, but his sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment.

The Bulgarian bishop Eugene Bossilkov should also be mentioned: he was condemned to death and executed in 1952. In Yugoslavia, Tito insisted on the dismissal of the Archbishop of Zagreb, Mgr Stepinac. He was arrested in September 1946 and tried for collaborating with the Germans. In Hungary, in December 1948, the Cardinal Primate, József Mindszenty, was arrested and taken to court. Most of the accusations of spying were entirely made up, though some did relate to actual intelligence activities. The Hungarians hoped to use the allegations to barter for securing an agreement with the Vatican, which showed how little they knew Pius XII. Mindszenty was condemned to life imprisonment.

The overall picture was sombre. Those clergymen who escaped prison were few and far between, except perhaps in East Germany (a predominantly Protestant country).

The fight for Italy

What's more, the fight was not limited to the Eastern bloc countries. The most crucial battle against communism was being fought at home, with Italian elections arranged for 1948. The country had become a parliamentary democracy after the war. Alcide De Gasperi, the founder of the new Christian Democrats and a protégé of the Vatican, had become President of the Council in 1945, heading a government of national unity.

According to American intelligence agency files, it was with De Gasperi that Montini planned his initial secret operations in Eastern Europe in the weeks following the occupation by the Soviets. According to confidences exchanged with Angleton, after Rome was liberated, Montini was given the job of reorganising the Vatican intelligence service by Pius XII. In reality, as we now know, there were several units that needed coordinating. Apart from the Russicum, entrusted to the Jesuits, there was also a service officially given the task of looking for people who'd disappeared during the war, but the US security services thought its role went way beyond its humanitarian aspect. In addition, several small organisations, working by themselves, were formed at the time, like the Veritas agency, led by a group of Czech Catholics, the FIDES international agency and the UDA (Ufficio Documentazioni Attività). These émigré networks pretended to act on their own initiative but actually reported faithfully to the Montini team.

Italy's frightful post-war economic situation opened up a truly wide avenue for the Italian Communist Party, which hoped to take power by the ballot box. Several European diplomats working in Rome mentioned how deeply concerned they were. The ambassador of Ireland to the Vatican, Joseph Walshe, wrote that there was already a lot of spying going on and he knew from a safe source that in a short while the diplomatic bags would become particularly interesting for communist employees in the postal service.[13] As far as he was concerned, what was at stake was nothing less than a fight for Western civilisation: if Catholicism were defeated in Italy, all Western Europe would run the risk of falling into the hands of the communists. The ambassador foretold there'd be a civil war if the communists won.

As he saw it, the Vatican was totally mobilised. "Never before in history has the Vatican led so powerful a movement in the country." He was alluding to Catholic Action and to the new movement called Comitati Civici (Civic Committees), driven by Luigi Gedda, who in addition was the chairman of the Catholic Film Centre. According to Walshe, Gedda had received the job of running all operations dealing with the 1948 elections from the Holy Father. The Comitati Civici was a secret organisation, based on the model of underground communist cells, and was present in each of the 300 Italian dioceses. Montini, who during the post-war years had played a major part in Vatican activity related to Italian politics, was worried by, and also no doubt a bit jealous of, the influence Gedda had acquired. In

reaction to the alarmist reports received from its ambassador, the Irish government seriously considered the possibility of the Supreme Pontiff seeking refuge in Ireland in the event of the communists taking power in Italy.

In 1946–7, the Americans tried their best to support the De Gasperi government economically (he had visited Washington in January 1947). While waiting for the Marshall Plan to begin, the State Department unblocked a loan of $100 million to assist imports (mostly American, it goes without saying). In May 1947, De Gasperi took the left-wing parties by surprise by having his government resign so he could form another with only the Christian Democrats. This decision created enormous tension, with fears of a revolutionary uprising. On 7 September, at a meeting in Parma, the leader of the Italian Communist Party (ICP), Palmiro Togliatti, revealed that the communists had an armed force of some 30 000 men and were threatening to send them into action against the authorities. This was, above all, a declaration intended to satisfy Stalin, but the threat still weighed heavily. It also enabled De Gasperi to play up the situation and ask his American allies for even more help. In case the election went badly and turned into civil war, the United States was ready to intervene militarily. Army advisers were already on the spot to examine all possible scenarios. The American general staff was developing battle plans.[14]

It became obvious that economic aid, although indispensable in preventing Italy from collapsing before the Marshall Plan came into effect, would not be enough to change the political situation. In November 1947, President Truman warned Congress: without sending massive aid to Italy and France, the rigours of winter would cause irreparable damage to the European economy and set off a new Great Depression. The result would be a threat to the democratic regimes. During the same month of November, the Chief of the General Staff, Dwight Eisenhower, asked for a list of reliable Italian agents who could be used by the CIA for clandestine operations. De Gasperi thought that a communist *coup d'état* could take place at any time. The Americans put pressure on him to take the centre-left ministers back into his government. Emergency funds were allocated to strengthen the internal security services. It was even envisaged mobilising Polish anti-communist troops stationed in Italy in case of an insurrection.

The Vatican shared America's concern. The Pope was bidding for his freedom of action since a communist takeover in Italy would make him a

prisoner again in the city-state. So he had to make his position clear, never mind if it contravened the principle of the Church's neutrality. In October, the Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Schuster, very clearly condemned communism and rejected Togliatti's idea that communism and Catholicism could coexist in Italy. In December when tension was at its highest, the Pope asked Catholic Action, the large secular Catholic organisation which straddled Italian society, to stand by to break up any attempt at a general strike by the ICP. With Montini as its intermediary, the Vatican informed the Americans that any intervention to counter a communist takeover would be welcome.[15] The Church rallied readily to anti-communist initiatives put forward by the Truman administration. The Christian Democrats and the right wing of the Socialists received secret payments worth several million dollars. A massive propaganda campaign was orchestrated so that Italian electors would block communism. In reality, the Communists didn't need to make a show of strength to take power. At the beginning of 1948, the polls showed that the Socialist–Communist bloc would win a fairly clear victory. All they had to do was wait a few months.

At the end of January, a depressed Pius XII declared to an American visitor that he didn't believe in victory anymore but it was necessary to confront the evil head-on. Within a month the Pope discovered sufficient signs of American engagement in the crusade against communism to take heart again. On the 22nd, he gave a speech to mobilise the cadres of Catholic Action. Two days later he ordered the clergy to be ready to go and vote. On 25 February, it was learnt that the Czech Communist Party had won the elections in Prague, which galvanised American public opinion.

The US National Security Council authorised the CIA to finance the Christian Democrats clandestinely. Truman also authorised arms deliveries to Italy, even though this was illegal. Big American firms in Italy were also invited to finance the Christian Democrats. In the case of a communist victory in Italy, the idea was to suspend all American aid and also to refuse visas to any member of the ICP. The Italian language radio programmes of the Voice of America were expanded. The most well-known Italian Americans were contacted to take part in programmes calling on the Italian people to vote against communism.

De Gasperi's campaign benefited from the Vatican's full support. Each church pulpit became a political platform. The religious orders were mobilised in turn. Montini's biographer Alden Hatch provided evidence of

his efforts: “With more than 300 bishops, 125 000 priests and almost 5 million members of Catholic Action, he was at the head of a movement that stupefied the experts. A short while before the elections, Montini organised a huge demonstration in Saint Peter’s Square: “The crowd filled the big square and stretched out along the Via Conciliazione, right up to the bridges on the other side of the Tiber and even further along the banks, to the top end of the Corso Vittorio Emanuele. The Holy Father, in the white and gold robes of his sacred ministry, spoke to them with passion, in the tradition of the Crusades … and his stirring words uplifted their hearts and penetrated the spirits of those who were listening to him.”[16] Pope Pius XII’s speech was broadcast all over Italy.

* * *

A sure sign that things were serious was the fact that the CIA played its trump card: James Angleton. He had returned to the US after the CIA was created in 1947 but was now sent back to Rome as a matter of urgency.[17] His mission was to prevent the Communists winning, no matter at what cost. He collected the special funds for the Holy See with the help of Dulles, who discreetly mobilised his friends in the State Department’s special projects division. Within the framework of this pre-election operation, the CIA agreed to sponsor the Intermarium network. This was not at all as straightforward as it looked because several of its high-ranking members were regarded as war criminals. A solution was found to enable the network to function under a respectable cover—by merging it with the recently established Radio Free Europe, a CIA offshoot. For its part, MI6 financed the bloc of anti-Bolshevik nations through the Vatican Bank.

Angleton recommended that the CIA finance Luigi Gedda’s Catholic Action but to a greater extent than had been intended. He declared that each region and each town in Italy faced a communist branch whose full-time personnel were paid for by the party. Moscow gave the ICP aid estimated at more than $50 million a year. A host of Italian import-export firms traded with the Soviet bloc under favourable conditions and handed over their profits to fund communist activities in Italy.

The Church alone was able to put a comparable organization into the field, but to do this its financial resources had to be strengthened. William Colby, the CIA’s station chief in Rome and Angleton’s boss, wrote in his

memoirs that the programme of political action which he took over was the chief mission of the Agency in that country, just as the millions of dollars devoted to it was the biggest sum ever allocated by the CIA to this kind of activity.[18]

Angleton's other mission was to coordinate the Italian secret services, the business sector and the Vatican, the Knights of Malta and even his friends in the French and British secret services. At the time, the recently created CIA didn't yet have an independent budget: the secret funds came a few months later. In the current emergency, Washington authorised Angleton to draw on the assets seized from the Axis forces, which in principle were to be used for reconstruction. Angleton made a first instalment in lire, the equivalent of $10 million, a considerable sum for the time, which was stuffed into huge canvas sacks. Part of it was immediately entrusted to Mgr Montini for depositing in the Vatican Bank. Another part was handed over to rich Catholic businessmen, who in return would make "regular" donations to political organisations, some of which the CIA had created a few days earlier. Finally, several millions were handed over to Catholic Action.[19]

The Americans transferred other wads of banknotes, jewels and gold seized from Nazi dignitaries to the safes of the Vatican Bank. At the instigation of Cardinal Spellman, who praised the commitment of Pius XII against communism with all whom he met, the American Church launched its own vast operation of fundraising. Spellman also organised the visit by dozens of senators and representatives of Congress to the Vatican. The French ambassador to the Vatican, Jacques Maritain, himself a fervent Catholic philosopher, resigned in protest against this confusion of politics and religion.

Operations were also extended into the field of psychological warfare, a domain in which Angleton knew how to be creative. One of his favourite films was the comedy *Ninotchka* starring Greta Garbo with screenplay by Billy Wilder, which the Italian public hadn't had the opportunity to see yet because it came out in 1939. This biting satire of the communist system is in no way a propaganda film and has remained a masterpiece of Hollywood comedy with its polished dialogue: "What's the news from Moscow?" "Good, excellent: the latest trials were a great success; there'll be fewer Russians, but they'll be better ones!" Angleton decided to have dozens of

extra copies made at the expense of the CIA and inundate the Italian cinemas, declaring that Garbo would be his most fatal weapon. It is not easy to say how much this rather unconventional method contributed to the Christian Democrat victory.

Applying another crucial psychological weapon in a Catholic country, Angleton had anonymous pamphlets made revealing the Communist candidates' private and sexual lives and, for good measure, depicted them as being friendly with the Fascists. In this regard, the CIA didn't invent anything new but just used proven techniques borrowed from the Nazi and Russian secret services.

In the end, the campaign bore fruit. The Christian Democrats, credited at the beginning of the year with 36% of the popular vote, made a spectacular recovery and obtained 48.5% in the elections. The Communists still made a good showing, while the other parties were eliminated. A big part of the success for this was attributed to Catholic Action. It remained a dominant force in Italian politics right through the Cold War. The joint efforts of the Vatican and the CIA completely polarised Italian political life around the Christian Democrats and the Communist Party, preventing any alternative from emerging for a long time.

Some politicians and prelates remained benefactors of the CIA's largesse, which amounted to more than $20 million per year in the 1950s. At the time, the CIA supplied funds to a number of priests and bishops for various projects, generally in the form of contributions to their favourite charities. These prelates often didn't know the true source of this money.

The Gladio networks

After the warning in 1948, the threat did not recede. Networks capable of resisting a communist show of strength in Europe had to be set up. With the Italian minister of the interior's agreement, Angleton thus employed former cadres of the OVRA, the Fascist secret service. Ever since 1947, he had also financed a clandestine anti-communist organisation, the Armata Italiana della Libertà, placed under the command of Colonel Ettore Musco. In April 1949, shortly after NATO was founded, SIFAR (Servizio Informazioni Forze Armate), the Italian military intelligence service, was created, commanded first by General Giovanni Carlo Re, and then by General Umberto Broccoli. In the 1950s and 1960s, SIFAR was not an

independent secret service: the CIA had a say in its recruitment and received a copy of all its reports. Paolo Taviani, the Italian minister of defence from 1955 to 1958, admitted later that SIFAR was directed and financed by “the guys from the Via Veneto”, i.e. the CIA and the American Embassy in Rome.[20] One of SIFAR’s reasons for existence was to manage the Italian part of the Gladio programme.

This is how the powerful leader of the Christian Democrats, Giulio Andreotti, presented Gladio on 24 October 1990 to the Italian deputies: “After World War II, the fear of Soviet expansionism and the inferiority of the NATO forces compared with the Soviet Cominform led the Western European nations to envisage new, less conventional forms of defence, creating hidden resistance networks on their territories which were to operate in the case of enemy occupation, with intelligence gathering, sabotage, propaganda and guerrilla warfare.

“An agreement was signed between the American services and the SIFAR concerning the organisation and activities of a clandestine network post-occupation, an agreement which was commonly called ‘Stay Behind’, in which all the obligations previously agreed to by Italy and America were confirmed. The foundations were thus laid for implementing the operation code-named Gladio […] At the start, for these clandestine activities, it was planned to enrol roughly a thousand men, of whom a hundred had already been recruited and trained for intelligence, propaganda, escape and infiltration work. Training and participation in acts of sabotage and guerrilla warfare were reserved for selected members of the service. In the case of a conflict, it was planned to recruit an unspecified number of partisans from among the service’s cadres.”

This description was true but some things had been omitted. Indeed, how could one believe that the Vatican had been kept out of such an initiative while many of the Catholic intelligence networks formed the majority of the CIA’s sources for what was going on in the Eastern bloc countries? Of course, there was no question of priests getting involved in any dangerous activities. But it was not a matter only of recruiting fighters. Weapons, ammunition, radio equipment and so forth all had to be hidden. According to Andreotti, the equipment supplied by the CIA (such as hand guns, rifles with telescopic lenses, grenades, mortars) was buried in 139 hideouts scattered in forests, fields and graveyards. “He forgot to say that there were quite a few stashed away in the churches!” said an amused

former CIA agent,[21] who had spent the better part of his career in Europe. “Obviously, in 1990, the priests in place were no longer those that were there in 1949–1950: they were very surprised when we came to unearth the stashes.”

One priest, Father Giuciano, testified before the BBC cameras in front of his church: “I was warned in the afternoon when two journalists from *Il Gazzettino* came to ask me if I knew anything about the hoards of ammunitions here in the church. They started digging and at once found two crates. But the map indicated that they had to search about a foot from the window. So they started searching there too. They put one of the boxes aside as it contained a phosphorus bomb. The Carabinieri went outside while two experts opened the box. There was another containing two machine guns. All the weapons were new, in tip-top condition. They had never been used.”[22]

That dozens of priests furnished hideouts for the Gladio network was no chance matter or the result of private initiative. It is most likely that it had been authorised high up, by Pope Pius XII himself, at the CIA’s request. No Vatican records will attest this: instructions of this sort would have only been transmitted orally. Just as with hiding Jews and escaped Allied soldiers in Vatican properties in 1943–4, it all had to remain top secret and deniable at all times. At a push, each priest who accepted a consignment didn’t need to know what was inside it. It was enough that a superior authority had asked the priest to obey without asking questions.

Gladio was a European phenomenon, spearheaded by the CIA, MI6 and NATO. All Western secret services were connected to it in one way or another. The Vatican was no exception. But recruitment was not up to scratch: nobody worried about the background of the recruits, as long as they were anti-communist. That was why some of them later gave way to violent action, leading to the terrorism of the 1970s (see chapter 12).

In 1955 General Giovanni De Lorenzo was put at the head of SIFAR. He was fiercely pro-American. “With his mustache, his glasses and his military bearing, De Lorenzo embodied the old-style general,” Ganser reported. He was the main link with the Americans on the Demagnetize programme: this consisted of carrying out paramilitary political and psychological operations, in cooperation with French and Italian military intelligence, aimed at softening up communists in those two countries—the

most exposed ones. De Lorenzo started a giant filing system of Italian left-wing figures, which little by little turned into an overall surveillance of the Italian political classes. The general was very keen to know about the elites' private lives: extramarital relations, homosexual affairs, engagements with prostitutes and the like. Everything was noted down and De Lorenzo shared it all with the CIA, which was thus able to recruit or put pressure on politicians, journalists, businessmen and even clergymen. Carried away by his enthusiasm, De Lorenzo even went so far as to place microphones within the Vatican, in John XXIII's apartments.

After the country was rocked by scandals—including a planned *coup d'état*, which we will look at later—SIFAR was disbanded in 1965.[23] A parliamentary inquiry concluded that "collecting information for the NATO countries and *for the Vatican* had become one of the SIFAR's main activities".[24] This phrasing might lead one to believe that, while spying on the Vatican, De Lorenzo also supplied it with information.

Our agent in Washington

While the main battle against communism was being waged in Europe, the Pope's right-hand man was looking after the struggle on the American continents almost single-handedly. In February 1946, Francis Spellman was appointed a cardinal, which increased his stature and prestige. He was now a little, bald, chubby man wearing the purple robe of a cardinal, which inspired respect in the highest places. He wore a gold cross on his chest on every occasion, a present from Pope Pius XII. His influence went a lot further than that of an archbishop of New York. Over the years, he had amassed power for himself without equivalent in the history of the American Church. He spoke with presidents, the CIA, the FBI, senators, mayors and more. He travelled throughout the world.

Fiercely anti-communist, Spellman fought Marxism as the deadly enemy of both Catholicism and the United States. He became a privileged interlocutor with the FBI, which was increasing its spying on communist organisations and the trades unions. The first to be informed when New York or foreign prelates were surprised in an awkward situation, drunk or caught with their trousers down in a brothel during a police raid, Spellman would intervene with the authorities in order to suppress the affair. In

exchange, the priests at fault became informers, at his mercy, and were given the job of spying on their flocks and revealing any hint of communism. As the Cold War was then starting, Spellman became an indispensable speaker at all anti-communist conferences. The United States became the Vatican's political and financial "Godfather", so much so that the Pope now needed Spellman more than the other way round.

The cardinal was now, after the CIA, the other important treasurer for the Church's secret operations. He handled enormous sums with an accountancy system reduced to its simplest form, and he continued more than ever to cultivate the friendship of rich Americans, some of whom left their fortunes to the archbishopric. These funds enabled him to look after the problems in his dioceses, but also to pursue his own secret operations, which did not necessarily go through the Vatican: he thus sent large sums to the Primate of Hungary, Cardinal Mindszenty, whom the communist regime accused of having orchestrated a royalist plot with Spellman, to place Otto von Hapsburg, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, at the head of a federation of Central European countries.

Spellman also visited a number of UN delegates, especially those designated as a priority by the Department of State. Still just as fiercely anti-communist, he gave his entire backing to Senator McCarthy, who started his witch-hunt against supposed communists within government agencies and then within Hollywood. On one occasion he met one of McCarthy's young assistants, Roy Cohn, who was to become a controversial and pitiless lawyer. As well as working for the Mafia, Cohn in the 1970s was the mentor of the young Donald Trump.[25] The lawyer became a Spellman disciple and informer about various affairs. Little by little, Senator McCarthy was ostracised by the Republicans in 1954 because of the extremes to which he went—he saw communists everywhere, even among high-ranking officers in the US Army.

That didn't prevent the CIA from asking the cardinal for help, in that same year, for a mission to Guatemala: the Agency needed a discreet contact on the spot with Bishop Mariano Arellano. Spellman, who among his numerous duties had to superintend the South American churches, already supplied the FBI with reports of information gleaned on the spot, or via reliable priests, about local communist activities. He was received with honours by the local dictators: Batista in Cuba, Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, Stroessner in Paraguay, Somoza in Nicaragua, whose firm anti-

communism he appreciated. He was seen more as a representative of the US than of the Vatican. In 1954, the CIA was already thinking of overthrowing the Guatemalan regime under Jacobo Árbenz, whose agrarian reform projects were threatening the United Fruit Company, an American banana company. Spellman didn't see why he shouldn't help the Agency with this task. A pastoral letter read on 9 April in all the churches of the country asked the people to "rise up as one man against the enemies of God and the country".

The CIA continued handing out anti-Árbenz pamphlets, putting forward Colonel Castillo Armas as the future saviour of the country. Some years later, during a congressional commission of inquiry, the CIA admitted it had recruited missionaries as informers and agents for this operation. Even though he was not in its pay, Spellman was the foremost of its religious collaborators.

From New York, he coordinated the joint work of Colonel Armas's partisans and "reliable" priests. As for Árbenz, he asked the USSR for help; the latter said it was sending military equipment, but Eisenhower decreed a blockade. The *coup d'état* took place in June 1954 with the help of American mercenaries. The CIA's radio propaganda persuaded the army's high-ranking officers to rally: Árbenz had to quit the country. The new government awarded the Church pride of place and returned its rights and possessions.

A spy, diplomat and a counsellor of princes at the same time, Spellman had reached the peak of his power. A member of the State Department admitted later: he not only served the foreign policy of the United States, but he contributed towards its orientation.

This symbiosis with American interests drew Spellman gradually apart from the Vatican, the culminating point being the Vietnam War. It wasn't surprising to see the cardinal campaigning in favour of support for the French army in Indochina, and then, after the Geneva Conference, which confirmed the partition of the country into two, campaigning in favour of the United States' direct involvement in South Vietnam, both to protect Catholicism and to save the country from the communist yoke. From 1950 onwards, the cardinal received at home a former seminarian, Ngo Dinh Diem, later to become South Vietnam's prime minister. After Dien Bien Phu, President Eisenhower wanted to promote a stronger leader than Emperor Bao Dai, who was not very popular. Spellman introduced Diem to

the State Department, to whom he seemed the ideal candidate for the job of prime minister. The CIA dealt with the details, that is to say, it fiddled the 1955 elections.

At the time Pope Pius XII agreed with this manoeuvre. Spellman dealt with “selling” the Diem solution to Catholic opinion and, with the help of Joseph Kennedy, creating a pro-Diem lobby in Washington. Within this lobby was to be found the former OSS boss William Donovan.[26] One of Spellman’s young protégés, the Catholic doctor Tom Dooley, who had practised in Vietnam and organised the exfiltration of some 35 000 Catholics from North Vietnam, wrote numerous magazine articles and books telling how the communists tortured the Catholics. He died very young in 1964. When, fifteen years later, a Vatican commission undertook to look at his file so they could make a saint of him, he was discovered to have been a CIA agent, which stopped the procedure in its tracks.

* * *

Spellman was without doubt the Vatican’s best agent: that at least is the most common opinion within the Curia. But other cardinals were active in their own zones of influence, though it isn’t possible to draw up an exhaustive list. Let’s go back to Cardinal Tisserant for a moment. As the French contact in Rome since the autumn of 1944, he was very active. He and Pacelli were perfectly in tune. The cardinal coordinated a huge range of figures drawn together by their anti-Marxism, among whom was an old friend: the Belgian Dominican Félix Morlión, ex-OSS agent and co-founder of Pro Deo, the international university for social studies. The Frenchman Paul Lesourd, a historian of Catholic missionaries who, during the war, had been a convinced Pétainist, was now to be encountered in his weekly journal *Voix Françaises*. He had assumed the mission of fighting “communist infiltration within the Church” and kept up a sustained correspondence with Tisserant. An even more surprising figure was “Professor Thomas Georges” (his real name was Tomislav Poglajen, a Slovene), who was introduced to Tisserant by a Jesuit father. Poglajen was the head of the Slovenian Christian Workers. Then he crossed into Slovakia, where he ran the anti-German underground, subsequently incorporated into the Red Army. In 1947 he was to be found running Chiang Kai-shek’s Christian Youth, and later became a professor of sociology in Taipei. After

staying in Rome, he set off again to fight communism in southern India. Tisserant didn't think he was responsible for the nonconformist Georges, but he did hand over large sums and recommend him to his networks. In the 1950 he was to be found in Indochina.

Colonel Claude Arnould was a more presentable figure, with perfect credentials: the founder of Jade-Amicol, the World War II intelligence network, he had been connected to the British services.[27] Arnould went to Rome regularly and gained access as a visitor to Pius XII courtesy of Bernard de Gorostarzu, the assistant of the Superior General of the Jesuits, himself a former member of Jade. Despite the war having ended, Arnould continued to run a clandestine network through the Convent of the Sisters of the Sainte-Agonie, in the rue de la Santé in Paris. Tisserant interceded several times with the congregation so they could continue to stay there. In the meetings organised by Arnould a host of rather motley characters would run into each other, all united in the fight against communist subversion, including the radical Émile Roche[28] and the future minister of the interior Raymond Marcellin. Several people joined this group at the instigation of Tisserant. "An anti-communist network in defence of religion was well and truly gathering around Tisserant at the beginning of the 1950s," concluded his biographer Etienne Fouilloux, who had been able to work with Tisserant's private archives. This was unusual.

* * *

If you want to discover which other major characters were active behind the thick walls of the Holy See, you'd have to go to a more unexpected source: the archives of the Bulgarian secret services. The KDS (Komitet za Darzhavna Sigurnost, or Committee for State Security) was known above all for murdering Bulgarian dissidents in West European countries in the 1960s and 1970s—the notorious business of the Bulgarian umbrella. Western researchers are still not well acquainted with its activities, even if we do know it was used like a subcontractor for certain missions the KGB wanted carried out. This may be explained by Bulgaria's geographical position, which has common borders with several NATO countries such as Greece and Turkey. However, in 2007 the Bulgarian parliament set up a commission with the task of declassifying part of the country's Cold War archives. Recently documents revealing the special attention paid to

religious affairs have been put online. In 2018 it was thus revealed that in 1971 the Bulgarian service planned to set fire to the Patriarch of Constantinople's records (in Istanbul) in order to cause a crisis between Greece and Turkey.

Who's who of espionage at the Vatican

The selection of archives we were able to consult shows that in the 1950s the KDS was much more interested in the Vatican than was originally thought. Here is a memo, dating from the beginning of 1959, describing the set-up in the last years of Pacelli's pontificate.

> Information on the Vatican institutions entrusted with intelligence activities.[29] Note dated 16 January 1959.
>
> The intelligence-gathering activities of the Vatican against the Socialist camp are carried out through the following organisations.
>
> 1. Centro di Studi Cattolici (the Centre for Catholic Studies)
>
>   Located in Rome at 1–3 Via della Conciliazione. This organisation was created officially as a research centre in 1955. Its aim was for the Secretariat of State to have its own intelligence service against the countries in the Socialist camp. Its leader was the Jesuit Herman Heck, from Munich, 57 years old, who'd come from the Papal Academy in Rome, worked in the Far East from 1945 to 1947, returning to a post in Italy afterwards —as head of the Institute for Propaganda against the People's Republic of China.
>
>   Heck was then the director of the international press agency Fidos, which was a member of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Heck looked after German questions personally, looked after personally the relations with the Gehlen intelligence service in the FRG [German Federal Republic] (the future Bundesnachrichtendienst, or BND). Heck reported directly to the Vatican Secretary Domenico Tardini.
>
>   The Centro di Studi Cattolici's task is to collect political, economic, financial, religious, etc., information and it is intent on obtaining documents with information.
>
>   In the Belgian town of Louvain, there is a unit working against the USSR, led by Boleslav Sloskan,[30] an Episcopal Visitor and member of the High Commission for Emigration at the Vatican.
>
>   The work against Czechoslovakia is directed from Rome, Via Concordia, and in the Nepomucene[31] College.
>
>   It is directed by Giovanni Busco, born in 1891, an Episcopal Visitor and member of the High Commission for Emigration at the Vatican.
>
>   Busco's assistant is the Slovak Rudolf Vrba, 32 years old, who has worked beforehand in the branch of Radio Free Europe in Italy.
>
>   The work against Albania is directed from Bari (Italy) by Enver Liccio, a former officer in the Albanian fascist police. The work against Hungary is directed from Udine by M.

Tot.

The Centre also has a courier service and the messenger is often a Romanian, Mika, 33 years old. A number of various travelling salesmen are also used as messengers.

Those who work in the Centre are: Antonio de Vries, the Jesuit monk Giovanni Liotsi, the Hungarian Josef Silay, the Russian Angelina Selert, the Englishman Tom Herman and others.

2. The Intelligence Service of the Order of Jesuits

   The Order of Jesuits' Intelligence Service also has counter-espionage tasks (uncovering and preventing the activities of communist agents in Western countries).

   Its head office is located at the Villa Malta in Rome. Its head is the Jesuit monk Floridi and his assistant is the monk Liotsi, who during World War II ensured the liaison between the Jesuit Order and the Allies.

   The mission of the Rome centre is to coordinate the activities of the organisations. The Jesuit Order also has its own services in the following towns in Germany: Cologne, Aachen and West Berlin.

   Their activity is directed by the monk Gustave Veter, a specialist on Russian questions. In Austria, the Jesuits are located in Vienna, as well as in Belgium, Holland, England and the US.

   The Order of Jesuits' head office for intelligence in West Berlin is in Kant–Suarez Strasse, in the Charlottenburg sector, under the cover of a pedagogical institute. Its head is the monk Paul Koch. Almost 100 émigré-traitors have been trained in this institute.

   The Order of Jesuits' propaganda school is located in the town of Bressanone, to the north of Balsamo, Italy. The director of the school is Mgr Hans Untergas. The teachers are emigrants from Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, etc.

   At the end of the lessons at Bressanone a supplementary course was provided for the Hungarians, Poles and Slovaks in Vienna, in an institute situated in the Gebrüder-Lang[-Gasse] Strasse.

   The Lithuanians are sent to Brussels, 17 Boulevard Lamermond [Lambermont], where they are trained in radio and press techniques. At the school in Bressanone, the lessons are about global politics and the history of trade union movements; knowledge of political and economic history in the popular democratic countries; lessons on anti-communist techniques and propaganda, and others.

3. Conferenza Cattolica Internazionale della Carità (International Catholic Conference for Charity)

   It was created in 1945 and in 1952 it was reorganised and enlarged. It acts under the cover of religious aid only among the traitors who had fled the socialist countries. Its centre is at 15 Via Conciliazione in Rome. Its director is Ferdinando Baldelli, and his assistant is John Grady. The US helped organise it materially.

   The "Caritas" section—it has representations in 37 countries. The Caritas section in Vienna is particularly active, 20 Rotenturm Strasse, directed by Breht. It collects information from deserters of the fatherland, recruits and turns agents.

This was what is called getting undressed. Because there is no access to the Vatican archives, it is impossible to check the accuracy of the information about each person mentioned. There are probably mistakes, exaggerations

and omissions. But the overall scheme is very convincing. The KDS had discovered that the Holy See's intelligence gathering was many-sided, decentralised and sometimes informal, collaborating with people who were not all necessarily priests. The geographic locations were very accurate and indicated that the places in question were under close surveillance and that those who went there were followed and that there were files on them. It is possible that the service had moles in certain cells. The amount of progress that had been made in such a short time can be measured when one reads another memo dated 5 November 1955, barely three years beforehand:

> The beginnings of Vatican intelligence date back to the time of Pope Pius XII. The Pope set the objective for the service as being the struggle against communism by all available means. To carry out this project, the Pope recommends using the opportunities available to the missionaries and Catholic priests, Catholic organisations, and monastic orders to the utmost for collecting information for spying; setting up contacts with representatives of the American and British intelligence services, who will transmit information that can be used in the struggle against communism; helping as much as possible to put Plan X into operation by the American intelligence service, which, according to information from the American press, has recommended organising espionage and sabotage, organising the murders of known communist leaders […] The Vatican intelligence services work hard to undermine the Soviet Union, the democracies and all the progressive powers in the world. One must take into account the vast forces on which it is based, of anti-scientific religious teaching, of fanaticism, of the spirit of deep hate against all that is honest and progressive, against all that is new, the spirit of unconditional obedience to the Supreme Pontiff—the Pope. It is not difficult to understand that the potential of intelligence for subversive activities is enormous.

Vagueness and ideology dominated this older account in contrast to the precise, factual character of the 1959 report. It perpetuated the old belief that all priests indulged in spying, simply because they sent administrative reports to Rome. Whence the cliché of a whole Church devoted to spying.

It is clear that the KDS had discovered some good sources. On the other hand, in 1959 the Bulgarian service did not seem to know what exactly was going on behind the Vatican walls and who dealt with which files. Father Leiber, who had contacts with the Gehlen organisation (which became the West German BND), was nowhere mentioned. Other external intelligence organisations present in the Vatican were not mentioned. But that did not mean they'd not been identified: in the unstructured groups of Eastern Bloc secret services, everybody worked on the tasks that were assigned to them. Only the parent organisation, the KGB, had an overall view. Two conclusions can be drawn in any case: from the 1950s onwards the Vatican

possessed a powerful and complex intelligence set-up; and this was greatly compromised.

The twilight of Pius XII

The end of a pope's period in office is rarely pleasant for those who keep the Vatican machine working. The Pontiff's declining health, the speculations that go with that, and the slowing down of decision-making were, in the case of Pius XII, accompanied by paranoia and increasing authoritarianism. The Pope, who almost alone centralised all the intelligence collected by the Church, was certainly aware of the fact that he was not winning the Cold War, and this undermined his health. He isolated himself more and more, and Sister Pascalina more often than not forbade access to his apartments, which caused much frustration.

The main victim of all this bitterness was Mgr Montini, one of the Pope's closest and most devoted collaborators. In 1954 the Pope appointed a series of new cardinals. Everybody was expecting to see the faithful Montini on the list, but he wasn't. The Pope decided to appoint him Archbishop of Milan. Seen from the outside, this wasn't an ignominious step. But for those who knew the finer details of Vatican ways, it was a punishment. But for what?

Some of Montini's supporters have accused Sister Pascalina of having intrigued against him. If there was intrigue, it was most likely the conservatives in the Curia who convinced Pius XII that Montini was inclining to the left: he was criticised especially for his role in the running of the Catholic Action youth movements, which called upon the movement to have a more social policy. Entering the Secretariat of State in 1925, Montini was often considered a modernist and a liberal, with a critical vision of capitalism as an "oppressor", and with left-wing friends. His brother Ludovico belonged to the left wing of the Christian Democrats and worked for Jean Monnet. Even so, the Under-Secretary of State was never faulted for his loyalty and his CIA friends didn't think him as far to the left as all that.

Another possible explanation is that from 1953 the relations between Bernardino Nogara, the all-powerful head of the Vatican Bank, and Mgr Montini had become tense. Montini deplored the lack of any real control over the bank. He also criticised the increasingly invasive presence of the

Pacelli nephews in the affairs of the Church. They had free access to their uncle's apartments. In Rome, it was known that if you wanted to do business that needed the Pope's agreement, you had to go through them. Nogara generously handed out directorships in the companies in which the Vatican Bank was a shareholder. Nepotism had always existed at the Vatican, but in the second half of the 20th century, for a moral authority like the Vatican, it was becoming more and more embarrassing to admit this.

And then there was the Tondi affair, which no doubt struck a decisive blow at Montini. It all started at the beginning of the 1950s. Since 1947–8 almost all the priests sent clandestinely into the Eastern Bloc countries were arrested as soon as they arrived. At the same time, it became clear that the Italian Communist Party was informed of certain decisions taken by Pope Pius XII. Was there a mole in the Curia?

Pius XII asked for an inquiry. He designated Father Agostini, who had been an officer in the French Second Bureau in Algiers during the war and who now worked alongside Cardinal Tisserant. He carried out his investigation with full powers to watch, listen to and tail whomever he wanted. And in 1952 he got his man. In the very office of Mgr Montini, Agostini surprised a collaborator in the act of copying the names of the next missionaries about to be sent to the East. This was Alighiero Tondi, a Jesuit priest and vice-rector of the Gregorian University. According to the former French intelligence agent Pierre de Villemarest,[32] Tondi had attended a Jesuit seminary before entering the order in 1936, on the instructions of the Italian Communist Party. He seems to have gone on a training course at the Lenin University in Moscow. Recruited by the NKVD, he was ordered to identify priests and seminarians who were receptive to communist ideas. Having joined the entourage of Mgr Montini two years earlier, Tondi had had the opportunity to copy the information that the priests wanted to have passed secretly to Pius XII, often at their own peril. He was then entrusted by Montini with the task of strengthening relations with the teams of Luigi Gedda, the head of Catholic Action, and therefore was quite free to inform the Italian Communist Party.

Hauled before the Pope, Tondi admitted responsibility for his acts in the name of peace in the world. Montini pleaded for the affair not to be divulged in a public trial that would embarrass the Vatican, and that they only resort to firing him. Ten years later, Tondi married the woman who had been his handler within the Communist Party, Carmen Zanti.

What is more probable is that this Tondi affair was a catalyst in Montini's eviction: his enemies seized this golden opportunity to get rid of him. And the Pope, who grew increasingly more suspicious and bitter, allowed himself to be persuaded to get rid of him.

Nogara was no doubt one of those who were happy with this outcome. He himself retired at the end of Pius XII's pontificate, leaving behind him a small, tightly knit team which had mastered the most complex international operations. Mgr Alberto di Jorio, his right-hand man, remained in place as the bank's general secretary.

After the war, Nogara had invested in construction work, a wise choice given the amount of reconstruction the country needed after the conflict. He also took shares in several dozen Italian banks, so much so that he became the country's foremost financier. In 1954, Nogara passed on the torch of director general of the Vatican Bank to a Swiss banker, a former manager of the Crédit Suisse: Henri de Maillardoz. He left his successor with an institution that was much richer and more powerful than it had been when it began, but it was terribly opaque and it had no qualms about taking part in borderline operations.

Having an account with the Vatican Bank was a privilege. Money there was safe from any Italian monetary or tax regulations. You could drop off a suitcase of banknotes without any questions being asked. There was nothing to prevent the transfer of funds to Switzerland, Luxembourg or the Bahamas. This suited rich Italians. Dozens of "reliable" priests organised the more modest flows, especially towards Switzerland. In all, several hundred millions of dollars were put away safely. The bank was used as cover for international speculation.

Occasionally, there were scandals. In the 1950s, a young archivist, Mgr Eduardo Prettner Cippico, was caught currency dealing. He lent rich customers a hand in transferring large sums abroad. After being locked up during the investigation, he managed to escape. He was found with the widow of a Fascist general. Tried and sentenced to nine years in prison, he was acquitted on appeal and was even reinstated into the order a few years later. A high-ranking prelate confided to the journalist Paul Hofmann: "He paid for all the others. He was forced to cover better-known people than himself; people close to Pope Pacelli … You see what I mean. But he behaved correctly, he never spoke and he was finally rehabilitated."[33] The

wheeling and dealing that was denounced in the 1970s and 1980s was already in place under Pius XII. It was considered a necessary arrangement, a bit like the sale of indulgences: didn’t it after all serve the cause of the anti-communist crusade?

Overcome by several health problems, Pacelli took to his bed at the beginning of October 1958 under the watchful eye of Sister Pascalina; he received extreme unction from Cardinal Tisserant. The latter was also the Dean of the Sacred College: so it was his job to occupy the function of camerlengo—who runs the Church during the interim period—and organised the following conclave. Pacelli passed away on the night of 8/9 October. He had governed the Church for almost twenty years.

II

RONCALLI

6

DÉTENTE

In Italian counter-espionage, the following joke is often repeated:

The right wing of the Italian cardinals informs the CIA, and the left the KGB … But nobody informs the Italian services.

The Roncalli surprise

In theory, a conclave is a secret election: the cardinals gather together in closed quarters, without any assistants or any way of getting in touch with the outside world. The ballot papers as well as any notes taken during the assembly have to be burnt. However, with hindsight, it is possible sometimes to reconstitute the chain of events, thanks to the cardinals confiding in people close to them. Each conclave is by nature a mixture of rumours, intrigues and disinformation. Informal meetings multiply in the corridors, during meals or in the chambers, so as to secure the formation of large enough coalitions. In the event of one coalition not being successful, its members are reassigned to another candidate or are spread out among the others. Seen from the outside, the duration of the conclave gives an idea of the difficulty or the ease that the cardinals have in reaching an agreement to appoint the next head of the Church. Fifty-one electors were present on Sunday, 26 October, when the bell rang at about 10 a.m. to call the cardinals into the Sistine Chapel. Eleven successive ballots would be required.

The Italians, who made up the biggest group numerically, were preoccupied above all with finding an Italian pope. At the time, the pool was limited: there was no Secretary of State and the former Under-Secretaries of State Tardini and Montini had not been made cardinals by Pius XII. Among those who had the required stature, Cardinal Siri of Genoa was an ultra-conservative, rejected by the liberals, and his youth (he was 52 years old) meant that a long reign might be feared. With his status as Patriarch of Venice, Roncalli was *papabile*, though he wasn't considered a favourite. Elia Dalla Costa, the Bishop of Florence, who was both anti-fascist and anti-communist, was unable to reach the minimum of votes required—two-thirds plus one. Meanwhile, Gregorio Agagianian, the Armenian, seemed to be on the inside lane during the first ballots. Tisserant, the Frenchman, would have liked to be elected pope, but he was unable to gather enough votes in support. This was why he chose to have the French cardinals put their votes on Roncalli. Other groups, anxious to be finished, ended up doing likewise. At 77, Roncalli seemed like a possible transition pope. It was remarked that most of the popes with John as their Christian name had had short reigns.

Angelo Roncalli was born in 1881 in the Bergamo region, into a modest country family. His uncle, who was close to Catholic Action, encouraged him to enter the seminary. He was ordained a priest in 1904. Until 1914, he was the secretary to the Bishop of Bergamo, known for the support he gave to the working classes. He was a military chaplain during the war. He was then sent to the Vatican, where he and Montini became friends. In 1925 he was sent to Bulgaria on his first diplomatic posting. He was opposed to Mussolini and was happy with this foreign posting. In 1935, he became the apostolic delegate in Istanbul, a post which covered Turkey as well as Greece.

From the beginning of World War II, he organised the Turkish side of a channel for escaping Jews and members of the clergy who were victims of Nazism. He had free emigration permits handed out, particularly to those heading for Palestine under the British Mandate, as well as temporary baptism certificates and safe conducts. Together with the Red Cross, he provided supplies and clothing to the refugees. According to his canonisation file, Roncalli enabled 24 000 Jews to flee the occupied countries. Franz von Papen, the German ambassador in Istanbul, cultivated

Roncalli as his friend, going so far as to attend Mass every week with his wife.

One day Papen confided to him that he was in touch with anti-Nazi officers who sought to overthrow Hitler and negotiate with the Allies. He explained to him that if Pius XII issued a moral condemnation of Hitler, it would serve their fight by helping to rally Catholics to their cause. Roncalli sent his report to Pius XII, who remained sceptical: he was wary of Papen and did not think much of Roncalli, whom he considered a bit superficial in his judgements. He also knew that the Allies would only accept an unconditional surrender. It seems in any case that Papen looked the other way where the future John XXIII's rescue activities were concerned.

Although the Curia thought Roncalli was an amateur, he nonetheless succeeded in being on good terms with all the diplomatic corps in Istanbul. He was also on good terms with the Vichy representative in Istanbul and at the same time maintained links with a small Gaullist group, for whom he even agreed to relay messages to the resistance networks in France via the diplomatic bag.

In 1945, he was promoted by Pius XII to Paris, which surprised the Curia. Some regarded the appointment of this figure, considered to be "minor", as a measure of the bad feelings towards General de Gaulle, after he demanded the departure of the nuncio, Valerio Valeri, who had compromised himself too much under Vichy. In Paris, Roncalli had a lot to do to restore relations: the French government wanted Rome to recall 30 bishops thought to have collaborated too much, including the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Suhard. By means of delaying tactics and diplomacy, Roncalli managed to reduce this number to three. His relations with de Gaulle remained civil. Roncalli made a lot of friends among French politicians, but there was sometimes friction with the leaders of the MRP (the Mouvement Républicain Populaire), the French equivalent of the Christian Democrats, who meddled too much to his liking in discussions about episcopal appointments. He was unanimously respected and this was no doubt why the French cardinals were to vote for him. Roncalli was elevated to the rank of cardinal in 1952 and became the Patriarch of Venice. He was expecting to end his career there and devoted himself entirely to his pastoral task.

Roncalli, elected as a transition pope, was all straightforwardness and a man of dialogue, even if he remained an anti-communist. Although it was

brief, his reign was marked by a spectacular and unexpected about-turn. As soon as he came to the throne of Saint Peter, John XXIII admitted that Pius XII's Cold War strategy had failed. We do not have the sources telling of his relations with the various groups dealing with secret operations and intelligence on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The only thing that is certain is that Roncalli did not change their organisation or their missions a lot. But as soon as he arrived he understood that the secret war carried out with the CIA's support was leading the Church into a dead end.

For many Catholics, John XXIII's pontificate can be reduced to his main work: the Second Vatican Council. The Church's work of modernisation was indeed a major event for the faithful, "the most important event of the 20th century", as even Charles de Gaulle wrote.[1] But behind Vatican II hid another, much more discreet operation carried out by the Pope: renewing dialogue with the communist world. The first tangible sign was that Roncalli obtained permission for seventy bishops from behind the Iron Curtain to go to Rome to take part in the Council. The Patriarchate of Moscow even sent two observers with the Kremlin's agreement.

Parallel diplomacy

The new Pope was in a hurry. He knew he didn't have a lot of time to make his mark. So he didn't waste time reforming the Curia. It was sometimes easier to go round it.

Under John XXIII, the Secretariat of State was headed by Cardinal Amleto Cicognani. It was still divided into a section which dealt with the general business of the dioceses worldwide (except for the missions) and an extraordinary section dealing with the Vatican's foreign policy. The first was headed by Archbishop Angelo Dell'Acqua, the second by Archbishop Antonio Samorè, two career diplomats who disagreed on almost everything. Samorè was a vigorous anti-communist, which was why the Pope didn't hesitate to go round him. He used parallel diplomatic means, at first his private secretary, Loris Capovilla, but also, on an ad hoc basis, the so-called substitute, Dell'Acqua, and the nuncio in Ankara, Mgr Francesco Lardone.

Loris Capovilla became Roncalli's secretary when the latter was Patriarch of Venice in 1953. This choice got under people's skin because Capovilla was reputed to be open to socialist ideas. But Roncalli knew what

he was doing: Capovilla's network was useful for building up contacts and for correcting Roncalli's traditionalist reputation. He became familiar very quickly with the progressive currents of thought within the Church. He was even able to become the unofficial protector of the Jesuits by defending their cause with his friend Archbishop Montini in Milan.

When he became Pope in 1958, John XXIII appointed Capovilla to the post of private secretary, which left him with greater freedom of action. He became his discreet messenger and paid attention in particular to the files on secret contacts with the Eastern bloc.[2] These contacts were made through unofficial emissaries. Roncalli first asked an old friend, the priest and historian Giuseppe De Luca, who had contacts within the Communist Party and easy access to the party's First Secretary, Palmiro Togliatti. The latter welcomed the offer of dialogue between Rome and Moscow and offered to be an intermediary with Khrushchev.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the CIA made the Church the central pillar of its struggle against communism in Italy. It handed out large sums of money to various works and projects supported by Vatican organisations. Within the Vatican, however, the prevailing mindset changed gradually and subtly after the election of John XXIII. The Pope thought that the Church had to remain strictly neutral in the political sphere.

It wasn't long before the Curia became aware that discreet contacts were developing with Khrushchev. The news provoked a shock wave within the CIA: John XXIII was no longer a reliable ally. The chief of the Agency in Rome, Thomas Kalamasinas, was instructed to increase its spying on the Vatican. This son of Greek immigrants matched the profile of the first generation of agents who formed the CIA: a lawyer before the war, he joined the OSS and served in several European countries before spending several years in Greece, where he faced communist attempts to seize power. This Orthodox man converted to Catholicism when he married a Catholic. His capacity for action was limited, however, because the Pope kept his informers within the Curia, all ultra-conservatives, at a distance.

There was a paradox in that John XXIII was meanwhile trying to develop direct relations with the Kennedy administration, in office since January 1961. As far as American public opinion was concerned, the president took a lot of care not to answer his discreet appeals too warmly, so as not to appear too subservient to the Pope.

In 1961, John XXIII celebrated his 80th birthday with a solemn mass in Saint Peter's Basilica. The United States' official representative on this occasion was John McCone, the director of American intelligence, who wanted to sound out himself the state of mind of this unpredictable pope. The Americans were all the more anxious as on this occasion John XXIII received a message of congratulations from the Soviet First Secretary, Nikita Khrushchev, which was unprecedented.

Consolidating relations with the great powers had been carried out up until now in small steps. This took a more spectacular turn in 1962 with the Cuban missile crisis. When on 24 October President Kennedy announced a blockade of Cuba, after Soviet ships has been sighted on their way to the island carrying nuclear warheads, the world had never been so close to a nuclear war. On the same day, Archbishop Dell'Acqua received a call from the United States, from the Dominican Father Félix Morlión, whom we have already met.[3] He was then with a friend, Norman Cousins, a Jewish philanthropist, editor of the *Saturday Review* and founder of the Dartmouth Conference for Peace. A meeting of this group was being held at that precise moment in the state of Massachusetts, gathering together American and Russian writers and scientists. To the conference members, it seemed the world was on the brink of a nuclear conflict and only the Pope had the necessary moral authority to initiate de-escalation.

John XXIII envisaged launching a public appeal for peace, on condition that the two parties agreed to his intervention. Morlión and Cousins talked in private with the head of the Soviet delegation. With the Russian ambassador in Washington, he agreed to relay the proposition to Moscow. Two hours later, Khrushchev let it be known that he willingly accepted the Pope's proposal. Now it remained for Kennedy to be convinced. Cousins was a welcome visitor to the administration. The reaction was more measured. Kennedy's close advisor Ted Sorensen returned Cousins's call from a telephone booth outside the White House. The president put his conditions: the Pope's appeal had to remain of a general nature and not touch on or refer to the possible conditions of a compromise. In the eyes of the American people the president could not be seen to be obeying the Pope's instructions.[4] During the night the Pope dictated a text, which was submitted to both parties. The next day, the Pope went to the Radio Vatican

studios to read his appeal. The following day, *Pravda* printed it on the front page; this was a first.

For historians, the Pope's intervention did not fundamentally influence the Kennedy administration's management of the crisis. But it could well have been decisive from the Russian point of view: the appeal by the Pope gave Khrushchev a good reason for playing the part of appeaser, against the advice of the Politburo hawks who were insisting on an armed confrontation. He was able to have this conciliatory line adopted by arguing that it reinforced his international stature and augured well for a reversal of the Vatican's alliance.

A month later, Kennedy's special assistant, Arthur Schlesinger, received a visit from another papal emissary, whom he didn't know. The managing director of the Italian public television, the RAI, Ettore Bernabei, was a close friend of Secretary of State Dell'Acqua and of Amintore Fanfani, the Italian premier. He had come to convey the Pope's desire to set up contacts with the Kennedy administration. The American diplomats working in the Rome embassy were too openly opposed to John XXIII's conciliatory attitude towards the Eastern bloc to allow for a constructive dialogue. Schlesinger duly forwarded a note of his meeting with a favourable opinion, but Kennedy refused to follow this up. The American president had to undertake a European tour in the summer of 1963. A meeting with the Pope while in Rome would have been logical: Eisenhower had done the same thing before him. But the CIA didn't approve. It reported in a telegram of 4 November 1962 that the Pope was suffering from cancer of the stomach and had only a few months to live. In reality, the Pope had been living with this disease ever since he was appointed Patriarch of Venice, but his doctors were becoming pessimistic about his condition, all the more so as he refused to be operated on. On 26 November he suffered a serious stomach haemorrhage, which the Vatican presented as gastritis.

On 2 December, the Pope had recovered enough strength to appear in public during a ceremony for the Second Vatican Council. The same day he had to meet with Norman Cousins: the editor of the *Saturday Review* had asked for and obtained an interview with Khrushchev, which was still due to take place. With this in mind, he had met Kennedy, who asked him to sound out the First Secretary's intentions about the Geneva disarmament negotiations. Cousins had come to take the Pope's instructions before going on to the USSR. But John XXIII had presumed too much on his strength

and had to retire to bed after appearing at the Council. So Cousins was received by Dell'Acqua and Cardinal Testa, who directed the Congregation for the Eastern Church. The remainder of the Curia was kept in ignorance of this rather un-Catholic mission, carried out by a Jewish New York editor.

Cousins met Khrushchev for no less than three hours. He was struck by the admiration that the First Secretary seemed to have for the Pope. He brought up the situation of Archbishop Josyf Slipyj, the Ukrainian Metropolitan imprisoned for collaborating with the Germans, whom the pope would have like to see freed. This took place six weeks later.

A week after his visit to Moscow, Cousins was received by the Pope in Rome; he handed him his written report on the possible ways forward:

1) Russia desires the pope's mediation and Khrushchev agrees that it should not be limited to mediation in moments of crisis, but should be a continuous action by the pope in the cause of peace.
2) Khrushchev affirms that he wants to open lines of communication with the Vatican through private contacts.
3) Khrushchev acknowledges that the Church respects the principle of the division of Church and State in many countries.
4) Khrushchev acknowledges that the Church serves all human beings and is not only concerned with Catholics.
5) Khrushchev acknowledges that the pope has acted with great courage, considering the internal problems he faces, just as Khrushchev has internal problems in the Soviet Union.

The Pope answered Cousins: "We must not give them [the Russians] up because we do not like their political system. They have a deep spiritual heritage. This they have not lost. We can talk to them. Right now, we *have* to talk to them […] I am not of afraid to talk to anyone about peace on earth."[5]

Slipyj's release reinforced John XXIII's belief that he had been right to put an end to four decades of Cold War with the Soviets. He left Cousins to report to the Kennedy administration. But once again, the editor didn't receive any reaction to his memorandum. After several reminders, Kennedy sent him a particularly vague letter, which didn't mention the Pope at all. It seemed that Kennedy didn't trust Cousins. It must be said that the CIA had pulled the rug from under his feet: in a fifteen-page memo drawn up at the beginning of 1963 and sent to the president, the Rome station chief, James Spain, expressed real doubts as to John XXIII's policy of openness and the seriousness of his emissaries. According to him, the idea of Khrushchev being a force for moderation within the Politburo was far-fetched. Spain

wrote that it was “extremely difficult to reach any firm conclusion on the extent and the reliability of the Vatican’s knowledge of communist affairs, and the effectiveness of its tactics. Many Vatican priests talk of ‘our dealings’ and ‘our negotiations’ with the communists but they supply little specific information on the manner and mechanics of their approaches. They also talk of ‘our sources’ within the USSR and suggest that there are still priests active underground there, but again details are not forthcoming. While they hav evolved a fairly precise analysis of the fundamental factors in their own relations with the USSR, and of what they think is happening within the Soviet Union, they do not seem to have tried to relate this image of the Soviets to Soviet action and policies in other fields, such as Cuba and disarmament.”[6]

In short, John XXIII was a very naive person who only saw what he wanted to see. And that risked causing disastrous consequences for Italian politics. The Pope’s overture to the Eastern bloc could free Italian Catholics from the ban on voting for the Communists, allowing the country to swing over to them. In view of this, one can better understand the coldness of the Kennedy administration after the memo was read with great attention.

Little agreements among friends

In this context it was natural for the Vatican to increase its links with partners other than the CIA. General de Gaulle and Roncalli, who knew each other well, had come to power in the same year, 1958. The following summer, on an official visit to Italy, the French president took advantage of the opportunity to visit the Pope. One doesn’t have to be a clever politician to deduce that secret cooperation with France was what His Holiness the Pope wished for, but the French hadn’t waited for this alliance to launch projects in common.

Under Pius XII, the clandestine propaganda operation Pax had been set up by the French SDECE, coordinated by Mgr Giovanetti for the Secretariat of State. He was the first assistant to Mgr Tardini, Under-Secretary of State and head of the extraordinary affairs section. The lynchpin of the set-up was a discreet priest, the Dominican Father Yves-Marc Dubois, who lived in the Convent of Cherche-Midi when he was passing through Paris. He had been the chaplain of Lord Mountbatten’s HQ in the Far East during World War II,

then chaplain to the French expeditionary forces in Indochina. He was now a member of the pontifical delegation to the United Nations. Father Dubois ran a network based in Switzerland: he was supported by Father Henri Marmier from the Fribourg diocese, the editor-in-chief of an international Catholic press agency, KIPA—in other words, another intelligence network. Father Marmier and another Dominican, the Polish Father Józef Maria Bocheński, had created the Institute of Sovietology under the auspices of the University of Fribourg, which gave an academic facade to their work. The institute served as support for a clandestine network of assistance to undercover Catholic groups on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

The Pax project was a sort of co-enterprise: the Vatican supplied the religious literature; the SDECE got it through into the Eastern Bloc countries. With the help of the French services, Father Dubois's team set up a "committee for the persecuted Church", which in 1956 brought out a *Red Book of the Persecuted Church*, giving details of ill treatment meted out to the Catholic Church in all the communist countries over the previous ten years, including Asia. The book initially appeared in Italy, and was then translated into seven languages. Several tens of thousands of copies were taken clandestinely into Eastern Europe, with the help of the SDECE and the German BND, who mobilised their "honourable correspondents", or part-time agents, travelling between East and West. Giovanetti placed monks from the Russicum at their disposal. The "honourable correspondents", who included Air France pilots and air hostesses, merchant navy officers, teachers, industrialists and businessmen who visited the Eastern countries, were all mobilised by the Action Service of the SDECE to put the books in designated letter boxes. The operation was well compartmentalised, and rare arrests by Eastern bloc services led nowhere. The Canon of Fribourg recruited a Swiss policeman, Louis Gauthier, a former canton police chief, to coordinate the clandestine action with the SDECE in the East.

Infuriated by these violations of Swiss neutrality, the Soviets had a French officer in hospital in Switzerland assassinated. Another priest in the network was kidnapped on a mission to Helsinki and never reappeared.

Unsurprisingly, it was in Poland that the operation was most wide-ranging. The German BND head, General Gehlen, had agreed to contribute as much funding as the SDECE, or 500 000 francs monthly.

This operation did not exclude other initiatives that individual prelates could discreetly support without referring to the Pope. Cardinal Tisserant, who was still active, continued to maintain his parallel networks, staying in touch with people who did not know each other but who shared the same objectives. From the mid-1950s, he had no qualms about receiving the sulphurous Georges Albertini. He was the former trusty assistant of Marcel Déat's RNP, the collaborationist party. After the war, Albertini reappeared as a crusader in the anti-communist struggle. He ran a private secret service called the "Centrale", which various management and investment groups financed.[7]

After Stalin died, Tisserant declared that the Soviet camp regime was eased. This provoked a fierce debate with Albertini. Tisserant was sure of his informers: Father Bernard Dupire, a priest in the Russicum, and Father Chaleil, who had returned from the USSR. They were given the task of establishing a reception centre for Russian-speaking students in Paris. The Assumptionist priest Father Nicolas, who had lived in Romania, then Odessa, before being dispatched to a camp, could also be counted upon. Stalin's death enabled him to get out. Once in Rome, he drew up a detailed report on the situation in the USSR at the time. It was chiefly his testimony that enabled Tisserant to affirm that things had relaxed after Stalin's death.

The SDECE's "liaison officer" with the Vatican was Jean Violet. He was a business lawyer who used the same anti-communist networks as Tisserant. He had worked with the cardinal in 1956 to prevent Lebanon from breaking off diplomatic relations with France after the Suez fiasco, an affair that had caused outrage in the Arab world. At the end of the 1950s, Jean Violet had met European business people (such as the industrialist Carlo Pesenti), politicians (like Giulio Andreotti or the head of the German CSU, Franz Josef Strauss), and also people from the Vatican, in particular the former secretary of Mgr Montini, Giovanni Benelli. For the SDECE, there was no doubt that Violet was also a Vatican agent, but that, in full knowledge of the situation, he could be used when the interests of the two powers were the same. Violet was handled exclusively by the SDECE directors or their assistants until Alexandre de Marenches, who had just been appointed to head the service in 1970, suspended this association.

A specialist in international business, who had mastered English, Spanish and Italian, and was registered with the Paris Bar, Jean Violet started again in business and began travelling all over the world. General

Paul Grossin, who became the director of the SDECE from 1957 to 1962, later confirmed[8] that the lawyer had “successfully” fulfilled his mission with international organisations as well as an SDECE and BND joint mission. Regarding his relations with the Vatican, Violet simply indicated that he had, in Rome as in other capitals, “a certain number of personal friends”. Observers noted that the lawyer was elevated to the rank of commander of the Order of Saint Gregory under Paul VI’s pontificate. “I owe this distinction”, he explained, “to a Dominican friend of mine, the Reverend Father Dubois.”

At the end of 1959, Violet took part in a new joint venture between the SDECE and the Vatican: convincing the UN delegates from several countries, particularly in Latin America, to reject motions condemning France for its activities in Algeria. The previous year, a first, very moderate, motion had been passed thanks to the bloc of African and Asian countries that had recently won their independence and felt sympathetic to the FLN’s struggles. This time it was a question of avoiding the passage of a harsher motion, which would have been a terrible affront to General de Gaulle’s France. Father Dubois was to be involved too. As an SDECE “honourable correspondent”, he had already supplied valuable information about the FLN. Even better, he was able to join the Vatican’s UN delegation unofficially, bringing Violet with him. It is quite likely that such an arrangement, which gave semi-official status to an agent of the French services within the Vatican delegation at the United Nations, had inevitably obtained the agreement of the Secretariat of State, if not of the Pope himself.

Father Dubois, who had been promoted since the Pax business, was now one of the Holy See’s leading agents. At the end of the 1950s, some directors of European intelligence services even considered him the head of the “Vatican spies”. Let’s say rather, one of the network heads. In New York, Violet and Dubois were put up by the local correspondent of the SDECE, Colonel Jacques Hervé.[9] The latter later described Violet, under the name of Blondet, in a novel, the *Vade-mecum du parfait agent secret*,[10] as the “itinerant correspondent of the Ordre Théosophique International [the International Theosophical Order], the OTI,[11] whose reputation for discretion was equalled only, it was said, by its power. Only the rich get

credit.” This is the first occasion that we come across Opus Dei, which was to play an increasing role in this story.

Let us note for the moment that this religious movement was founded in 1928 by Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, a Spanish priest. In particular it promoted holiness throughout world, both among lay people and among secular priests. The movement developed especially after 1945, establishing itself notably in Portugal, in Italy and in France in 1947, then in the US and Mexico. Opus Dei enjoyed close links with the Franco regime. In 1946, Balaguer lived in Rome so as to have his movement recognised as a secular institution. He quickly achieved his goal: on 2 February 1947, Pope Pius XII promulgated the constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, which defined secular institutes and gave them legal status. They were “societies of clerics or lay people whose members, with a view to seeking Christian perfection and giving themselves over totally to the apostolate, undertook to practise the evangelical counsels in the world.” No life in a monastery, no clerical dress: the members lived “like everybody else”. On the other hand they made a vow to follow the three evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity and obedience. Members kept their possessions but could only dispose of them under the control of their superiors. Membership had to remain secret, from friends and family and even from the local religious hierarchy. Only three weeks after the promulgation of the constitution, Opus Dei obtained from the Pope a “decretum laudis” (decree of praise): it opened the way for definitive approval, given in June 1950. In the Church’s structure, the secular institutes depended on the Congregation for the Religious, as did the religious orders.

The date of founding was no simple matter of chance: this was the beginning of the Cold War and for the Pope the secular institutes represented an army that was being formed. Among them, Opus Dei was the vanguard. Opus Dei, which initially numbered only some two or three hundred members, expanded remarkably after 1947, especially in South America: Argentine and Chile in 1950, Colombia and Venezuela in 1951, Guatemala and Peru in 1953, Ecuador in 1954, Uruguay in 1956, Brazil in 1958. In the field, from the 1940s and 1950s onwards, Opus Dei ran into the Jesuits, who condescendingly watched the movement take its first steps.

But when Opus Dei was put under the same authority as them, the Jesuits started to take the competition seriously. The two movements were aimed at the same clientele: the bourgeoisie’s young intellectual elites.

Opus Dei made a breakthrough by means that were sometimes contested: it was criticised for recruiting in institutions with Catholic students, which was tantamount to stealing from the other orders.

The Jesuits formed a sort of parallel church with its own colleges, its own training centres, its own organisations attached to Catholic Action. Now Opus Dei came along and duplicated their institutions, often in the same towns. For instance, there was a training centre for heads of companies directed by the Jesuits in Barcelona; in the same town there was also a higher institute of business studies run by Opus Dei.

Opus Dei adopted a military-style organisation, very much hierarchical or pyramidal, which copied that of the Jesuits to a degree. From other points of view, Opus Dei recalled Freemasonry: with its initiation, various grades of membership, and separation between members and people at large. Finally, ever since the 1930s, the Jesuits had spearheaded the struggle against communism. Opus Dei positioned itself in the same niche: to persuade Pius XII to give it the status of a secular institute, Balaguer promoted the idea of an “apostolate of penetration”. He too wanted to send clandestine agents to the other side of the Iron Curtain.

On the other hand, John XXIII had little time for Opus Dei and, no doubt, within Opus Dei the feeling was mutual. But that didn’t prevent Balaguer from seeing where his interests lay: growing quickly, his movement had very rapidly gained influence among the South American elites. Opus Dei could therefore open the way for Violet and Dubois, who began a tour of South American capitals. Certain countries whose leaders listened to the advice of Opus Dei agreed to change their vote at the United Nations on the Algerian question in exchange for monetary compensation. Others like Nicaragua and Paraguay remained uncommitted until the end in order to raise the bidding.[12] In fine, the balance lay in France’s favour. De Gaulle remained free to implement his Algerian policy without suffering any international condemnation. And the business lawyer Violet once again enhanced his reputation and his international network. In the SDECE, he had an office at his disposal on the same floor as the director. The same group carried out a lobbying mission similar to the one that enabled France to set up nuclear testing bases in the Pacific.[13]

Code name: Gustav

As we have seen with Operation Pax, the French weren't the only ones interested in the Vatican. The West German secret service, the BND, had seen the light of day at the beginning of 1956; it succeeded the Gehlen Organisation (sometimes called the Org), which relied heavily on the Americans, but it had a great handicap, as the KGB had infiltrated it. Reinhard Gehlen was still its head.

Barely four months after it got under way, the BND was visited by the heads of SIFAR, the Italian military intelligence. One person taking part in this meeting was a translator, Reinhard Gehlen's half-brother Johannes (Giovanni) Gehlen. Johannes had grown up in Rome before World War I and had returned there after the war to continue his banking career. He joined the Nazi Party in 1933, resumed his scientific studies and wangled his way into a research institute at the end of the war. In 1946 he was back in Rome.

Although a Protestant, Gehlen was the private assistant of the secretary in charge of foreign affairs in the Order of Malta's head office in Italy. The SIFAR reports said they suspected Johannes Gehlen was spying for Germany in Italy. They supposed that he was also working for the American services.[14] Reinhard's brother had entered the Org on 1 January 1946 and was given the code name Gustav. He was infiltrated into Italy, crossing the Alps clandestinely. He ran the local office from 1946. The CIA, which had served as the Org's guardian since 1949, didn't like Gustav, whom it thought was unsuited for intelligence work, but he remained in his post, protected by his brother.

According to the Org archives, Reinhard Gehlen and his assistant were received in a private audience by Pope Pius XII in January 1949; he had authorised Gehlen to contact Father Robert Leiber. In the Org's records, establishing relations with the Vatican appeared under the heading "relations with foreign intelligence services". It was as if Father Leiber was recognised as having the rank of the head of a secret service. Gehlen was granted another interview in 1953. The Org counted on the Vatican's support to secure cooperation with Catholic states like Spain, Italy and France.

The final months

Even if he pretended to have many years ahead of him, John XXIII was struggling with illness and knew that he didn't have much time left. The Pope was preparing to take a new step in his strategy with the *Pacem in Terris* encyclical, which was going to serve as a new doctrine of the Church. John XXIII was careful not to reject Pius XII's condemnation of communism, but he adopted a more flexible line: the Church must adapt to changes in the world and also to the change of attitude on the part of the communists themselves.

At the end of March, through Father Morlión's intervention, Norman Cousins suggested he go to Moscow again. The Pope asked him to hand Khrushchev a Russian translation of *Pacem in Terris* before it was published. The meeting took place on 12 April 1963 in the First Secretary's second residence, on the Baltic coast. Khrushchev was pleased in particular with the passages on disarmament, peace and communism. The encyclical was published three weeks before the Italian elections, giving the Italian Communist Party a little unexpected help. Togliatti seized upon it and declared that there was no incompatibility between the Catholic faith and the communist credo. The Italian Communist Party scored a historic victory, winning almost a million votes. As a result, the Christian Democrats had to form a centre-left government coalition with the Socialist Party. Just after the election, the CIA believed that diplomatic relations were going to be established between the Vatican and the USSR.

There was no need now for intermediaries. The Soviet ambassador in Rome and the Pope's secretary, Mgr Capovilla, met face to face. John XXIII was informed that the Eastern bloc governments had been instructed to work with the Holy See. The Polish Primate, Cardinal Wyszyński, let the Vatican know that the Gomułka government had sounded him out with a view to restoring relations. The Secretariat of State sent one of its experienced prelates, Mgr Agostino Casaroli, to conduct a series of official meetings in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the first since the end of the war.

Alarmed, the CIA's boss, John McCone, asked for a meeting with the Pope. Tall, thin, austere, with greying hair, McCone was a true patrician. He introduced himself as President Kennedy's personal emissary. He asked the Pope to put a halt to his rapprochement with the Eastern bloc. According to him, American Catholics were shocked by the *Pacem in Terris* encyclical. It could all end very badly.

The Pope listened in silence, and then answered that his understanding of the world's affairs could not be the same as that of the United States. He wished to maintain relations with all countries and to promote reform and social justice everywhere in Europe and Latin America, which would be the best way of fighting communism.

McCone emphasised that behind their conciliatory talk, the communists were persecuting Catholic priests.

"Does the United States government have communist sympathies?" asked the Pope.

"Of course not," McCone replied.

"But the United States maintains diplomatic relations with the USSR."

"That's different. There are practical reasons, like trade."

"Well, the Pope also has his own form of trade: the commerce of souls. He has to think of the well-being of Catholics in Eastern Europe. He has to work for peace. These are reasons for keeping a channel of communication open with the communist world."[15]

As a result of this interview the Americans thought that regular contacts with the Pope would be of no value. It would, however, be possible perhaps to take advantage of the Vatican's activity in the East. Since it now had greater access to the Soviet bloc, it would no doubt obtain information that might escape the CIA's notice. By spying on the Vatican, more could be learnt about the USSR and its satellites.

For his part, the Pope thought rather naively that he'd convinced McCone that his steps were useful for the West. Who knows? Maybe he could even bring Kennedy and Khrushchev together under his aegis? Casaroli carried out his mission of parallel diplomacy, on which he reported directly to the Pope—and not to his superior, Samorè. In Hungary, Cardinal Mindszenty had remained a recluse within the American Embassy since the 1956 uprising. Five of the fifteen Hungarian bishops were in prison. With no sources of income, the Hungarian clergy depended financially on the government, which at first paid priests who agreed to "cooperate" with the regime. Casaroli's initial visit secured the return of five banished bishops. In exchange the regime expected the Vatican to get Cardinal Mindszenty out of the country. The problem was that the cardinal, very annoyed by the new policy of openness to the East, thought that leaving the country would be a betrayal.

The Polish Church was one of the strongest and the most defiant in the Eastern bloc. The Catholic faith, far from declining under the communist regime, grew stronger in Poland. The Polish regime showed a new desire to negotiate a concordat with the Vatican, but it tried to go over the head of the Primate, which the Pope didn't like. During his visit to Poland, Mgr Casaroli explained clearly that no regime could hope to improve its relations with Rome without first having normalised its relations with the local clergy.

On 21 May 1963, the Pope received Cardinal Wyszyński for a long audience. No information filtered out about their talks, but the CIA thought it knew that the Pope had given him all the necessary powers to determine the nature of the relations that the Polish government might establish with the Church, which would reinforce its own position. A few days later, however, the Pope's health again took a turn for the worse.

On 31 May, the CIA's Rome station sent an urgent message to its Langley headquarters: "Pope John XXIII sank into a coma this morning. His condition has got considerably worse. The Italian state radio announced at 12h45 that the Pope's condition had improved towards the end of the morning and that he had been given extreme unction." It is significant that the CIA was reduced to using the radio to obtain the latest news: it revealed that the first circle, under the control of the Pope's secretary Capovilla, remained tightly closed to American spies.

A bugged conclave

When John XXIII died, the future of relations between the Vatican and the Eastern bloc depended on the choice of his successor. Mgr Casaroli meanwhile was obliged to stop travelling behind the Iron Curtain and await further instructions. At the Geneva disarmament conference, the American and Soviet delegates put their bitter debates aside for a day to participate in a unanimous homage to the deceased Pope.

No doubt relieved by John XXIII's departure, the CIA got back to work at once, evaluating the various scenarios for the succession to the Papacy. On 15 June 1963, President Kennedy received the following report:

Country: Italy Report No TDCS DB-3/654,973

Subject: Successor to Pope John XXIII Situation appraisal

Source: Staff officer of this organization Commentary.

Following is a [CIA] appraisal of the present situation. It is not an official judgment by this Agency or any component. It represents the observations and interpretations of a staff officer based on the information available to him at the time of its preparation. Prepared for internal use, this commentary is disseminated in the belief that it may be useful to the Department of State in assessing the situation for its purposes.

Based on background knowledge, exhaustive scanning, and discussions with persons in various fields, the following speculations concerning the successor of Pope John XXIII are offered.

A complicating factor in predicting who the next pope will be is the increased size of the College of Cardinals, which is now 82, compared to 55 in 1958. The average time that the 1958 group had been cardinals was much longer than the average for the present group. Moreover, in 1958, it was much easier to identify each of the cardinals with one of three major categories: Liberal, Conservative, or Moderate. The present College contains 44 cardinals created by John XXIII, but some are far from being in the Liberal group …

The possibility of a non-Italian pope might be examined first … In our opinion such an eventuality is unlikely […]

A prime consideration is certain to be the next pope's attitude towards Vatican Council II and Pope John's policies in general. We think that the prevailing mood will be to continue them, but perhaps to check certain aspects which many cardinals, including some Italian, think have gone too far. This is especially true with respect to Church relations with the Communist world, which seems to have created some chinks in the non-Italian Liberal front. Even if Pope John's successor is committed to his general policies, the tendency is usually to go more slowly and to take stock.

It might also be said that what is needed now is not innovation, but implementation. It is difficult to see how the conclave can ignore the fact that Pope John's reign has created a definite worldwide image of the papacy and of great expectations and that they now must in some manner be carried forward. It might be argued that cardinals have never shown themselves to be overly concerned with public opinion, but public opinion regarding the Church has never been brought to bear or stirred up to the extent it has in recent years …

> It does not seem likely that an interim candidate will be sought, barring an unbreakable deadlock, since what Pope John's policies need now is continuity. It is felt that the average age of serious contenders will be at least lower than John's was and that it will tend more to return to what has been the age of popes over the last 150 years. While this might appear arbitrary, it would eliminate 15 of 28 Italians, some of whom are not likely candidates for other considerations of health and policies too … All of the foregoing are over 75. Of the 13 remaining Italians, [3] might be eliminated because they are known as definite opponents of Pope John's policies […]
>
> Among the strongly committed Liberals, Montini of Milan stands out and almost everyone queried comes up with his name sooner rather than later. Montini is certainly going into the conclave as the favourite of the masses.

In short, though the CIA preferred by far to see the conservative Siri from Genoa appointed, even before the conclave started, it produced a rather lucid assessment of the situation, without confusing its wishes with reality. Although the reign of John XXIII was brief, he had appointed more than half of the cardinals who were getting ready to vote during the conclave. And his policy of openness to the East was not going to come to a stop. The Vatican didn't work in fits and starts.

Aware that the champion of anti-communism, Cardinal Siri, could not attract the centrist votes that were vital for him to be elected, a group of Italian, Spanish and South American cardinals agreed to support Cardinal Ildebrando Antoniutti, who had spent nine years as nuncio in Madrid and who was liked by Franco. The liberals, who included 6 Italians, 4 Americans, 2 Germans and 8 Frenchmen, by themselves couldn't reach the two-thirds majority required, i.e. 55 votes.

A few hours before he left for the conclave, Cardinal Spellman was visited at his residence by a CIA officer who wanted to talk to him about observations that had been made on the stakes involved in the succession. The shift to the left made by John XXIII had had a dangerous result in South America, where a number of socially concerned priests inspired by the *Pacem in Terris* encyclical were becoming involved and taking a position in their sermons against the local governments, all of which

strengthened the communists. What were the chances, asked the CIA man, of electing a pope who would slow down this dangerous development? Spellman, who had never missed an opportunity to go and support American troops in Korea and Vietnam, had not been one of John XXIII's admirers. When his friend Pius XII passed away, his political influence in the Vatican started to wane. The three other American cardinals were clearly in favour of the liberals. And Spellman didn't even agree with the choice of the conservatives who wanted to support Antoniutti, a figure he thought was insignificant. In his opinion, only Siri was worthy of his support. But he wasn't going to explain openly that he was no longer the "American pope" he had once been, so he could only give an evasive answer.[16]

The young visitor then came to the real reason for his visit. The CIA needed to know the conclave's outcome before anybody else. The international stakes were very high. Political issues would certainly be an important part of the debates. The CIA would in this way be able to send the name of the new pope to the Langley HQ before all the media on the spot.

For the members of the Italian services who were following the conclave, there were only two possibilities: the CIA had succeeded in placing microphones, or it had an informer among the cardinals. He would have had to be equipped with a radio transmitter, since the cardinals had no access to a telephone. In the now declassified CIA archives, no indication can be found enabling one to know more. But one thing is certain: if a cardinal *had* dared to carry a radio transmitter during the conclave, there was only one possible candidate bold and committed enough and on the side of the American secret services: Spellman.

III

MONTINI

7

PAUL VI'S TORMENTS

"Montini is our Hamlet."

John XXIII

Giovanni Battista Montini was born in September 1897 at Concesio, near Brescia, into an upper-middle-class family. His father was a member of parliament and the editor of the Catholic newspaper in Brescia. So, while still young, he was steeped in politics and Christian Democracy (his elder brother became a senator). Health problems in his youth caused him to miss school often and he studied with a private tutor. His serious character impressed people. His mother encouraged him to take up the priesthood and he was ordained in Brescia in 1920. The bishop sent him to Rome to complete his training. He enrolled in theology at the Gregorian University but, thanks to his family contacts, he was soon recruited by the Secretariat of State. In 1921 he was appointed secretary to the apostolic nunciature in Warsaw. At 26, he became a *minutante* at the Secretariat of State, and assistant chaplain to the Federation of Catholic Students. This allowed him to make friends with future key figures of Italian politics. In 1937, Montini was appointed a deputy of Secretary of State Pacelli, at the same time as Mgr Tardini. Both of them remained his closest colleagues for twenty years.

Montini acquired a reputation for being progressive in social matters—in his opinion, the best way of countering communism. In 1954, he was appointed Archbishop of Milan, without becoming a cardinal as was the

custom. In theory, this rebuff removed all chances of his attaining the throne of Saint Peter.

This setback in his fortunes didn't have only a negative side: it gave Montini the experience in the field that he lacked. He put his all into his pastoral mission, paying particular attention to the workers: he went out into the suburbs of Milan celebrating Mass, visiting factories, sometimes enduring threats from trade unionists. It seemed crucial to him to set up new parishes in some Communist fiefs. As soon as he could appoint new cardinals, John XXIII didn't hesitate to promote Montini (in 1958). And he made no great secret of the fact that he thought of him as a possible successor.

When he left Rome for Milan, Montini had to find himself a new secretary. Father Pasquale Macchi had been recommended to him and he was never to leave him. Born in Varese, Macchi studied for a long time in France and produced a thesis on the French writer Georges Bernanos. He taught French literature near Milan. Small and bald, Macchi had a talent for going unnoticed during public occasions. Montini could therefore send him on missions to the other end of the world without his absence raising any comments.

Macchi had one weakness: an immoderate taste for art and jewellery. During the whole pontificate, he devoted a lot of energy to acquiring the works of artists that the Pope liked, drawing on the financial contributions of rich Italian nobles and businessmen to do so. This thirst for buying things gave a hold to the host of wheeler-dealers of all kinds in the entourage of Paul VI. One anecdote: during the summer of 1968, the Pope left for his holiday as usual at Castel Gandolfo. His absence was used for carrying out maintenance and restoration work in his private apartments. Four technicians were given the job of checking the telephones. They were taken into the telephone exchange room. There, on a shelf, were cardboard boxes bearing tempting inscriptions: gold, silver, bronze and so on. They contained a stock of pontifical medals. The workers were tempted and removed thirty or so of them. Ignoring who the thieves were, Macchi decided to hush up the scandal. The next year, the same workers got in secretly by the terrace. In Mgr Montini's office, they discovered trunks containing precious stones—presents given to the Pope. Then they were imprudent enough to go back into the telephone exchange room where they stole other medals. Unfortunately for them, a Roman dealer put one of the

stolen medals on show for sale in January 1973. The pontifical gendarmerie investigated and followed up the lead. The Vatican, unusually, asked for judicial assistance from Italy and the thieves went on trial the following year.[1]

Apart from Macchi, Paul VI brought into the Vatican a group of advisors and lay colleagues, to take on jobs that were sometimes ill-defined. They were soon nicknamed the "Milan Mafia".

The conservatives in the Curia and elsewhere thought that Macchi was a "socialist". One of them was Cardinal Spellman, who had to put aside his prejudices as far as Montini and his entourage were concerned, so as not to weaken his own position.

The Rome–Washington axis isn't what it was

In the days preceding the conclave, Spellman had consulted incessantly and came to the same conclusions as the CIA on the chances of the various competing *papabili*: even if Montini wasn't one of his friends, the American thought that the Italian had a very good chance of winning and that it was better to pull out now, without waiting. Right in the middle of the election campaign, Montini met with Spellman in a spirit of generosity because his support would bring in the vote of the American cardinals.

Despite the facade that was presented publicly, Spellman first and foremost followed his own ideas rather than toeing the Vatican's line, that of the increasingly irritated Pope Paul VI. During Lyndon Johnson's presidency, the pope invested effort in a diplomatic campaign for a negotiated peace with Vietnam, through direct contact with the Vietnamese, as well as by putting pressure on protagonists like the French, who were known for being influential in Saigon and Hanoi. The whole of the Vatican's intelligence machine was mobilised: diplomats, religious orders, missionaries,[2] secret envoys. Paul VI even managed to open a channel for negotiating directly with Ho Chi Minh.

Meanwhile, Spellman was campaigning in the other direction: at Christmas 1965, he was to be seen visiting American troops and shouting his support for his country's policies from the rooftops. In the eyes of the Vatican he had become a dissident. In 1966, Spellman returned to address the troops whose mission he likened to a "holy crusade", the "War of Christ

against the Viet Cong and for the North American people". The Pope was furious but, indecisive as usual, didn't dare punish the old cardinal. The following January, pacifist protesters invaded Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York during Mass and unfurled anti-Spellman banners. The FBI was now obliged to keep an eye on these New York activists to avoid further embarrassment to director Edgar Hoover's great friend. The "American pope" was no longer in step with either the Vatican or the White House. He passed away on 2 December 1967.

The Spellman case, while indeed spectacular, was no exception. It is known nowadays that the nuncio in Romania, Archbishop Gerald O'Hara, who was expelled by the Romanian authorities in 1950, was a CIA collaborator. O'Hara was a close friend of Cardinal Spellman and remained in the Vatican's diplomatic circuit. Based in Georgia before the war, O'Hara had had a child with a woman who engaged a private detective in the 1980s to defend her rights. The detective found evidence of O'Hara's regular contacts with CIA agents and Roy Cohn, Spellman's lawyer disciple.[3] At the time, the CIA seems to have recruited a number of priests, in particular those in exile from Eastern European countries. Jonathan Kwitny mentions the case of a Polish priest who passed on Wyszyński's confidences during his visit to Rome in 1951, to the CIA.

Relations between Paul VI and John Kennedy, the first Catholic president in American history, were not as easy as one might have expected. The president had received the result of the conclave when he was in Dublin, at the beginning of his European tour. The CIA had prepared a psychological profile of the future pontiff. Ever since Montini's disgrace in 1954, the CIA considered him to be too far to the left; even so, he was still an important person in the Church. That is why the chief of the CIA's Rome station had maintained the habit of visiting him and paying funds into one or other of the various good works that Montini had at heart.

Two days after the enthronement, John Kennedy, at the time on the third day of his Rome visit, was met by the new Pope, together with Dean Rusk, the US Secretary of State. Kennedy didn't know how to dress for a papal audience. Instead of asking the State Department, he asked the CIA. The audience was very formal and no new developments emerged in terms of American–Vatican relations.

The question of diplomatic relations was not brought up. Some of Kennedy's advisors pleaded for renewing Roosevelt's idea of having a personal representative of the president with the pope, whose status would have been more modest than that of a formal ambassador, but Kennedy cared more for his position of independence vis-à-vis the Vatican. The next day, Giulio Andreotti (then minister of defence) brought up the subject during a meeting with Kennedy. After all, if even the Arab countries thought it worthwhile having diplomatic representation with the Vatican, why didn't the United States? Kennedy seemed to hesitate and answered: "If I'm re-elected in 1964, I'll do it during my second term."[4]

In the April 1963 elections, the Christian Democratic party's results fell to 38% of the votes, the worst since its establishment after the war. For the first time, socialist ministers had to be taken into the government led by Aldo Moro, who represented the left wing of the Christian Democrats. Kennedy thought this quite normal: for him, it meant that part of the Italian left wing was evolving towards a democratic form of socialism. Moro and the Pope had known each other for a very long time. The former was appointed president of the Catholic Students Federation at the same time as the latter was leaving the post of chaplain there. Both men had remained in touch and shared the same vision of needing to compromise with the socialists.

The CIA and the State Department didn't agree: they feared that the Italian Socialist Party (ISP) wanted the American military bases in Italy to be closed down. In May 1963, the building workers' trade union demonstrated, demanding that the government be opened to Communist ministers. This was too much for the head of the CIA station in Rome, Bill Harvey: he activated the Gladio networks (coordinated by Major Renzo Rocca, an Italian intelligence service officer) to suppress these demonstrations. But he couldn't go any further without contradicting the president's official policy. Then a *coup de théâtre*: Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas in November 1963. The CIA and the Italian SIFAR made the best use of President Lyndon Johnson's relative lack of interest in Italy to take a stronger line against the Italian left wing.

Operation "Solo"[5]

The key man, on whom the CIA was counting, was General Giovanni De Lorenzo, who had run the SIFAR before being appointed to the head of the Carabinieri. The general had been able to obtain an entrée to the Vatican. At the beginning of John XXIII's pontificate, the Curia had become all excited because of a supposed correspondence between Pius XII and an Italian noblewoman which could have been vaguely compromising. It is likely that these letters were apocryphal, but they had been sold to journalists, enough to create the fear of a scandal, and they risked besmirching Pius XII's memory. Upon hearing the news, the head of the SIFAR saw in this an opportunity to cultivate relations with the Vatican and agreed to take on the matter.

He sent a colleague to Africa, where the owner of the letters was living. These were bought using secret funds, in exchange for a skilful combination of financial inducements and veiled threats. From now on, the general was consulted each time a cleric was compromised in an affair that was likely to create a scandal, even after De Lorenzo was transferred to the Carabinieri. His successors, Generals Viggiani and Allavena, maintained the link with the Curia. During Paul VI's trip to Palestine in 1964, the SIFAR was asked to ensure improved security was available for the Holy Father, who wanted this sensitive journey to be organised in great secrecy.

Later, in 1968, the members of the Curia coughed and choked when, through the press, they discovered there was a scandal implicating the SIFAR. Thanks to an impressive network of informers, bugging and private letter-opening, the military intelligence service had created a huge file featuring hundreds of clerics, bishops and even cardinals. It seems that Cardinal Dell'Acqua, the president of the Holy See's Prefecture for Economic Affairs, was one of the compromised prelates.

Before that, in 1964, De Lorenzo and Rocca very seriously considered taking forceful action. They were backed at the highest level: the president of the Italian Republic himself, Antonio Segni, feared a Communist coup. He thought that "Italy was getting close to becoming a Yugoslav-style regime". When received by Chancellor Adenauer, he violently criticised the policy of détente advocated by Kennedy and John XXIII.

In front of his American colleagues, General De Lorenzo said he was ready to act: "While admitting beforehand that it wasn't a matter of carrying out a *coup d'état*, De Lorenzo was quick to add that it was high time that the country's responsible politicians took responsible decisions. The Moro

government […] can no longer continue in the same vein because otherwise the country will become communist by default […]. The time has come to show our firmness while the forces of order—in particular the Carabinieri—are still able to control the situation. If there are to be street demonstrations, they will have to be opposed with firmness, even if such action leads to casualties."[6]

Between March and July 1964, De Lorenzo increased the number of secret meetings with the Carabinieri general staff to "deal with possible disturbances of public order". As the other armed corps could be infiltrated by the Communists, the Carabinieri would have to act "alone" (hence the name of the Solo Plan). The most sensitive aspect of the plan concerned the subversive elements that would be banished (*enucleandi*): they were to be transferred to Sardinia, to one of the Gladio organisation's bases. The list included members of parliament from the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, the former's security service (called the Red Gladio) and even intellectuals like Pier Paolo Pasolini and Gillo Pontecorvo, the director of the film *The Battle of Algiers*.

During the same period, NATO forces carried out large military manoeuvres in the region as if by chance, which increased the implied threat. But the plan was not put into operation. It seems that President Segni used it to place pressure on Aldo Moro: if he wanted to avoid having to use force, either he had to soften his government's political line or drive out the Socialists.

Moro persuaded the Socialists to accept a compromise. President Segni didn't savour his victory for long: he was the victim of a heart attack and was obliged to resign at the end of the same year. In 1967–8 a parliamentary inquiry took place into the Solo Plan. In July 1968, the investigators sent for the leader of the Italian Gladio, Major Renzo Rocca. On the day he was due to appear, Rocca was found in his apartment, killed by a bullet to his head. The following year, an officer investigating his death, General Carlo Ciglieri, was found dead in his car, apparently the victim of an accident. Giorgio Manis, another general due to testify before an investigating committee, collapsed in a Rome street, two months later. The following month, his assistant, Colonel Remo D'Ottario, shot himself in the heart.[7]

General De Lorenzo's *coup d'état* never became a reality. But it opened up a series of moments in a "strategy of tension" which were to last twenty

years and end in December 1984 with an attack on the Naples–Milan train. During those twenty years, various groups plotted to carry out *coups d'état* and attacks, with the intention of frightening Italian public opinion and justifying the slide towards totalitarian control.

Paul VI was Aldo Moro's friend and confidant and said nothing about this episode; he nonetheless followed it attentively, and there are strong reasons for believing that his discussions with Moro made him increasingly wary of the Americans and the CIA, and also of part of his own administration.

Questioned by the parliamentary commission, De Lorenzo had to admit that the SIFAR had carried out large-scale espionage at the request of the American intelligence services and NATO.[8] Following this scandal, the SIFAR was disbanded and replaced by the SID, run by General Allavena. Ordered to destroy the SIFAR's incriminating dossiers, De Lorenzo nonetheless handed over copies to the CIA and also to Allavena.

Ostpolitik

Throughout his pontificate, Paul VI continued his policy of overture to the Soviet Union. The leaders of Eastern Europe were welcomed in state visits. The Soviet minister of foreign affairs, Andrei Gromyko, met the Pope no less than seven times. Many Vatican civil servants, in particular Mgr Casaroli, went to Moscow and other capitals of the Eastern bloc countries for talks. Solutions were sought for old questions, like the case of Mgr Mindszenty, still shut up in the US Embassy in Hungary. The Hungarian regime had already allowed Rome to introduce six new bishops. Further progress would not be possible without the issue of Mindszenty being resolved. When President Johnson visited Rome in the autumn of 1965, he discussed the question with the Pope. This time the Americans wanted to settle the matter as quickly as possible. Subsequently, Casaroli went to Hungary again, but no minister wanted to meet him. In June 1967, Mindszenty finally agreed to leave the American Embassy. The Vatican had promised that he would say nothing.

In 1967, Paul VI made matters worse by publishing a controversial encyclical, *Populorum Progessio*, in which he criticised colonial repression and recommended economic and social remedies, which were interpreted as

a denunciation of capitalism. Shortly afterwards a group of international businessmen asked the Holy Father to “clarify” his economic views. The Pope felt obliged to publish a declaration in which he denied all hostility towards private enterprise. But the results were perhaps more real than they appeared. In the international community, the Vatican gained credibility, acquired a reputation for independence and scored some bonus points.

The Russians suggested that a conference be held on European security in 1972 in Helsinki, and invited the Vatican to take part. The French lawyer-spy Jean Violet thought it was an excellent idea. Dismissed by the SDECE in 1970, he had continued his activities privately and haunted the corridors of the Vatican, where he was “looked after” by Mgr Giovanni Benelli from the Secretariat of State. It was he who suggested bringing up the idea of the principle of “the free movement of people and ideas”, in Helsinki. For the Russians to accept this, it could not be proposed by notorious anti-communists. So there had to be discreet lobbying. This was financed by an Italian industrialist. Carlo Pesenti was a company director, a banker and a press baron close to the Christian Democrats.[9] His private plane was put at the disposal of Giulio Andreotti at the time when the latter, strangely, was not a minister.

The usual allies of Jean Violet went into action: the former minister Antoine Pinay; the former head of the SDECE, General Grossin; and also Constantin Melnik, whose job had been supplying intelligence to the cabinet of Michel Debré, prime minister before he went into publishing with Grasset. They prepared a brochure developing their proposals, which was approved by President Pompidou. It was used as the basis for an “appeal for real European security”, which was signed by many pro-European figures, French, Belgian, Swiss and German. Melnik handled liaison with the CIA and the State Department, via Henry Kissinger.[10] The Americans in turn were keen supporters of the “free movement”, which was accepted in the final moments of the conference. In Britain, the influential anti-communist agent Brian Crozier liaised with MI6.

In his memoirs, the head of the KGB analysts, N.S. Leonov, later admitted that the service had not seen the trap set for the Soviet system by the last act of the conference: “In this solemn act, the experts were alone in finding weaknesses which were invisible at first sight and which foretold great difficulties for the USSR. The concessions on humanitarian

cooperation, the freedom of movement, the exchange of ideas, all destroyed the Soviet system."[11] Without going so far, let's just say that they damaged it a bit.

The outcome of the Ostpolitik was therefore not completely without value. But our account wouldn't be complete if the formidable effort at penetration made by the Eastern bloc services against the Vatican during Paul VI's pontificate was not taken into account.

8

THE VATICAN MOLES

Murders in Paris

3 November 1964. A young student-like Parisian left his room in the rue Raymond Losserand, in the 14th arrondissement. He had an urgent meeting at the Place de la Porte de Saint-Cloud to hand over a thick file to a friend. Robert Fenoy was a former seminarian who worked with a group of young anti-modernist Catholics, opposed to Vatican II and to the détente between the Church and the communist world. This group helped refugees from the Eastern bloc. A number of them bore witness to the persecutions carried out in the communist regimes.

Fenoy reached the platform of the Duroc metro station. A rumbling sound announced the arrival of the next metro. The young man was waiting on the edge of the platform, a good way from his immediate neighbours. But as the metro entered the station, a hand reached out to push him from behind. Fenoy toppled over onto the rails and was hit by the metro. A woman screamed, and then a crowd gathered and commented on the accident. Two witnesses declared to the stationmaster that they'd seen an unknown man pushing their neighbour before fleeing. They were unable, however, to describe him with any accuracy. A priest then came up and disputed their version: he claimed that the unfortunate young man had thrown himself under the metro. The stationmaster didn't know what to

think; it was up to the police to deal with this affair. But in the meantime, the priest disappeared.

The police had other priorities: the OAS was attacking Paris and this needed almost all its efforts. The police station in the 7th arron-dissement was totally snowed under and didn't have a single investigator available. The investigation only started a few days later. A search of Fenoy's home enabled the police to find, in full view, a book dealing with suicide, in which some passages had been conveniently underlined. Case closed.

Who was Fenoy meeting on 3 November? With other members of his group, he was investigating the Pax organisation from Poland,[1] which had been developing its networks in France among the clergy and the Catholic hierarchy. Little by little, Fenoy was building up a file of the priests who were in contact with the clandestine representatives of Pax in France. The man he was going to meet at the Place de Saint-Cloud was called Émile Bougère.

Aged 61, Bougère was a former communist. At the beginning of the 1930s, in the 20th arrondissement in Paris, he had been the First Secretary of the Young Communists, and then became a journalist with the daily *L'Humanité*. In 1934, he decided to quit the party and became an expert on anti-communism, at the service of various municipalities and police forces.

Joining the Parti Populaire Français (PPF) of Jacques Doriot in 1936, he became the publishing secretary of collaborationist publications and was one of the leaders of the central press office of the PPF. Sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment at the Liberation, he was freed in 1951 and became a part-time assistant of Georges Albertini, the French anti-communist writer and publisher.

In 1947, the Cold War brought great changes in the political situation. The Paris Prefect of Police approved the creation of a very discreet Seventh Section of the Renseignements Généraux (RG), the police intelligence unit devoted to the anti-communist struggle. It was put under the command of Commissioner Jean Dides, who was the chairman of the Paris police commissioners' trade union. He thought that anti-communist expertise prevailed over any other considerations. This was why he had no scruples in recruiting the ex-commissioner of the RG, Charles Delarue, a former collaborationist, sentenced and imprisoned after the Liberation but who had managed to escape. Being an escapee and ex-convict, Delarue organised the

Seventh Section very secretly and called in Émile Bougère and various other PPF members who had distinguished themselves during the Occupation by hunting down French Resistance communists. But in 1954, the Seventh Section was hit hard by the “affair of the leaks”.[2]

As a result of the scandal it had to be disbanded. Delarue could not remain in Paris and set sail for Africa. He became an advisor on anti-subversion to the president of Congo-Brazzaville. A few years later he returned to Paris. His links with anti-communist organisations brought him naturally into contact with Catholic anti-modernist groups. And so it was that he was drawn into the Pax business.

Three weeks after young Fenoy’s death, Émile Bougère was in turn found dead in a not very busy side street. His pockets were empty, so it took the police several days to identify him. For Delarue, it was clear that Pax was at war with his network. It was better for him to have a change of scenery. He decided to accept a mission to Brazil, still in the context of the “anti-subversion struggle”. On the eve of his departure, he went into a café at the Porte de Saint-Cloud where he was an habitué, the same one which he had mentioned to Fenoy for their meeting. He went down to the toilets. Sometime later, a customer mentioned that one of the doors seemed permanently shut. The body of Delarue was discovered behind it.

Police inquiries into this series of deaths never got anywhere, but for French counter-espionage, however, it seemed more than likely that Eastern bloc services were responsible. The stakes? Preserving the Pax network’s capacity for action in Western Europe, especially in France. A few months earlier, Cardinal Wyszyński, who had collected leaked information about the operation, addressed a warning letter to the French clergy:

> Pax is presented as a movement of progressive Polish Catholics, but in reality Pax is not a “movement” but an organ of the police system directly responsible to the Ministry of the Interior, and carries out the directives of the secret police, the UB, with blind obedience. Its methods?
>
> It seeks to cause dissolution and disintegration, by creating sources of diversion among the faithful, but above all in the religious and ecclesiastical milieus; dividing the bishops into two blocks, the “fundamentalists” and the “progressives”; on a thousand different pretexts, setting the priests against the bishops; and by driving a

> subtle wedge into the masses through clever distinctions between "reactionaries" and "progressives".[3]

In all, in the 1960s the French secret services unmasked ten or so false priests from the Eastern bloc countries. Thus Ignace Lepp, an Estonian Jew and a militant in the Communist Youth Movement, converted to Catholicism in 1935, joined the seminary in Marseilles and worked in the Lyons Catholic University. During the Occupation, he took part in both the Christian Témoignage network and the communist action groups. After the war, in his writings, he declared he was a Catholic and a Marxist intellectual. But from 1959 the police intelligence agency put him under surveillance and spied on his meetings with his Soviet controlling officer. Judged to be too close to the FLN, Lepp was transferred to Madagascar by his superiors.[4]

This secret war concerned only a handful of compromised priests. But there was no reason to believe that it was limited only to France. It showed that the Eastern bloc services did not restrict their ambitions to the struggle against the Church within their empire.

The Vatican penetrated

On the Soviet side, the period of détente with the Church was over. The man who had personified it was the victim of a silent *coup d'état* in 1964: Vladimir Semichastny, the head of the KGB, told Khrushchev that he was dismissed from his functions but would be allowed to live in safety in his dacha. Leonid Brezhnev succeeded him and modified the strategy relating to religion. Instead of imprisoning or exiling priests, their number had to be reduced by obstructing appointments.

In 1965, the KGB had the Second Vatican Council (which continued under Paul VI) spied on by the Polish secret service, the SB.[5] Their mole within the council was most probably the priest Jerzy Dabrowski, whose collaboration with the service was revealed in 1997, six years after his death. In 1963, Father Dabrowski (code-named "Ignatius") was sent to Rome for seven years, before becoming the deputy secretary of the Polish episcopate. According to the testimony of a former SB agent,[6] Dabrowski supplied a lot of documents about Vatican II which the KGB considered

very useful. In a later report on the “Vatican’s anti-communist activities”, Dabrowski noted that “the Jesuits played a major role in the activities of the secretariat for non-believers and, in particular, in coordinating anti-communist activities. Apart from the secretariat, the other Vatican services continued their activities against the socialist countries. For this reason, it was absolutely vital to increase infiltration of these centres.”

In 1967, Yuri Andropov took control of the KGB and joined the Central Committee. In July, a conference of the secret services of the Eastern bloc countries was held in Budapest, with the aim of coordinating efforts against the Vatican. In an evaluation dated 1969, the KGB’s Central Directorate stated that the Vatican was still determined to “destroy the Soviet Union from the inside by using ideological sabotage”. “Clerics circulated works of propaganda by the Church praising the Western way of life, kindling nationalist sentiments in the populations of the Soviet republics, and spreading suspicion of State organisations and the Soviet Party among the Soviet people.”[7]

Following this, Andropov approved a plan to intensify the struggle against the activities of the Vatican and the Uniate churches in the USSR. It was a question once again of penetrating the main sections of the Vatican administration, the Jesuit order and the Russicum, which were considered the chief centres of destabilisation. The service managed to infiltrate agents who were members of the Lithuanian Catholic Church into the pontifical seminaries. The plan was to use active measures, notably by sowing discord among the Uniates and the other Soviet Catholics. In 1969, the head of the clandestine Uniate Church, Vasyl Velychkovsky, was imprisoned before being expelled in 1972. His successor, Bishop Volodymyr Sterniuk, was the victim of a campaign of rumours about an alleged sexual misdemeanour. Also in 1969, Andropov ordered spying operations to be intensified against the Vatican. He wanted Bishop Casaroli put under special surveillance since his numerous trips to the East, often in civilian dress, made him suspect in Andropov’s eyes.

In 1975, another conference took place to coordinate the efforts against the Vatican. It showed the progress several services had made. The Polish SB, the Czech StB and the Hungarian AVH announced they had recruited agents in the Vatican.

For some time now, the Russian Orthodox Church had become a “pilot fish” for the Russian services within international ecumenical institutions, such as the Christian Peace Conference, founded in Prague in 1958, and the Conference of European Churches (CEC). The foreign relations department of the Orthodox Church was closely controlled. Most of the Orthodox priests had no choice but to cooperate or they wouldn’t have been able to work. According to a KGB report made shortly before the USSR disintegrated, only 15% to 20% of priests refused to collaborate.

What was all the more remarkable in such a context was that a Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers’ Rights in the USSR should be founded in 1976, by two clerics and a lay person. Despite being under close surveillance by the KGB, this committee managed to send eleven volumes of documents recording attacks on religious freedom out of the country for publication in the West. The Fifth Directorate of the KGB then tried everything possible to neutralise this committee. In 1978, the KGB circulated instructions aiming to stiffen the struggle against the “subversive activities” of foreign ecclesiastical institutions and “hostile elements” within the clergy (order no. 00122):

> Under the pretence of concern for the freedom of belief and the rights of believers in the USSR, imperialist intelligence services and foreign anti-Soviet centres were organising ideological sabotage, aimed at undermining the moral and political unity of Soviet society and undermining the basis of the Socialist system […]
>
> Following the directives of the May 1975 conference of leading officials of KGB agencies [dealing with religious affairs], it had been possible to carry out measures to strengthen operational positions in international religious organizations, to expose and compromise their leaders, officials and emissaries of clerical centres. Experienced and reliable agents had been infiltrated into the leading circles of some sectarian formations, and measures to identify, prevent and terminate the subversive activity of hostile elements among the clerical anti-Soviet underground had become more effective, the further strengthening of the positions of progressive religious figures had been ensured, as well as their active participation in the struggle for peace and other political measures.[8]

One measure of the effect of this infiltration was the accuracy of certain KGB files. For instance, the Soviet leaders could read reports on exchanges

between Paul VI and his visitors from America (notably Henry Cabot Lodge, President Nixon's special envoy), Italy and so on. The high point of the operation was when Nixon met the Pope in the Vatican on 28 September 1970; the report on what was discussed was delivered to the KGB only a few days later. It was learnt that the Pope had warned Nixon that during a coming trip to Asia, he would be more critical of America's obstinacy as regards Vietnam.

The Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser died in September 1970 and was succeeded by Anwar Sadat. The US Secretary of State William Rogers made a tour of Arab countries and stopped off in Rome to inform the Pope of his exchanges. Once again the KGB was informed by the SB about the gist of Israeli–Arab negotiations and what the Americans were prepared to accept. It is probable that the KGB conveyed this information to its Egyptian ally. In turn, Sadat decided to send Paul VI an emissary. The Vatican declared it was prepared to assist Egypt's rapprochement with the US, if it meant that Soviet influence in Egypt could be reduced.

In 1972, Nixon planned a trip to the USSR, a sign of a possible détente. During the preparations, his special envoy Lodge met with the Pope again. The KGB was again informed of this meeting, but this time via the Stasi, which meant that it was a German spy who was present at the meeting or who got hold of the transcription. This was probably "Lichtblick", who will be mentioned later. The information enables one to understand the extent to which the work of the Eastern bloc services was compartmentalised: the KGB was the only service to have an overall view because it received reports from all sorts of sources. Judging by the archives available nowadays, it was, however, a one-way affair and the services of sister countries were far from possessing all the pieces of the puzzle.

Shortly after the Nixon–Brezhnev summit, the new American Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, in turn met the Pope to inform him of the gist of the discussions that had taken place. The report on this meeting was the last important document of this kind available in the Stasi archives, which leads one to two theories: either the reports on the later contacts between the popes and American presidents were destroyed when East Germany collapsed; or the services of the Vigilanza unmasked and neutralised all or some of the German moles. The KGB, however, continued to obtain other reports on the Vatican, from the SB and the Hungarian services.

The Czech StB also had a role in spying on the Vatican, managing to recruit agents. One of its targets was Mgr Josef Beran. Persecuted by the Nazis and deported to a concentration camp, the Archbishop of Prague had been imprisoned by the communist regime from 1949 to 1963. He was expelled in 1965 and taken in by Rome, where he dedicated himself to Czech refugees, housed in the Nepomucene Pontifical College. Among these refugees was Father František Kunčik, who had come from Czechoslovakia when he was 17 years old. Ordained in 1965, he was assigned to the Dolomites. But he began a liaison with a woman, which continued in Rome when he was reassigned there. His superiors did not know, but the Czech services took advantage of this to blackmail him: he now had to spy for the StB. He became Beran's chauffeur and had to report on all the cardinal's doings. He also took part in the receptions given by the cardinal. The latter died in 1967. In 1970 Kunčik and his companion were repatriated to Prague, where they married and worked on anti-religious propaganda.[9]

Another resident in the pontifical college was Jaroslav Fojtl, who, at the end of the 1950s, fled Czechoslovakia for Austria. He entered the Munich seminary, then went to Rome for a year before returning to Czechoslovakia. There, too, he left the straight and narrow path and fell in love with his cousin. The StB exploited their liaison to recruit him. Back in Rome, he spied on Czech refugees but was not as efficient as Kunčik. The Italian military intelligence SISMI, alerted by the German services, put him under surveillance. No doubt warned by Vatican colleagues, Fojtl fled just before being arrested.

Finally, what the East German services supplied should not be underestimated. For the Stasi, the most important source was Mgr Paul Dissemond, code-named "Peter". His contacts with the service began in 1974.[10] He was then 54 and general secretary of the Berlin Episcopal Conference (a post he occupied until 1987). Mgr Dissemond was not a secret agent: it was his superior, the Archbishop of Berlin, Cardinal Alfred Bengsch, who chose him to be the contact with the Stasi. One can understand that was in no way possible for the Catholic Church to work in East Germany without having to be accountable to the Stasi. In those circumstances, it was better to cooperate, in the hope of obtaining various administrative favours: the renewal of work permits, building permits and

even permits for leaving the country. These last-mentioned permits were keenly negotiated, as the Stasi demanded important information in exchange. Dissemond was therefore a sort of liaison officer. But could one remain so without compromising oneself?

Dissemond was no doubt unaware of the fact, but along the way he became a real Stasi agent. What was limited at the start to formal, polite meetings, required by his hierarchy, became bit by bit a closer relationship in which gave away increasingly sensitive information. So much so that, because of his reports, the Stasi came to consider him a full-time agent. He obtained small financial rewards and even medals for services rendered.

On another trip to Rome in 1977, the Stasi asked “Peter” to ask what the Vatican’s future position would be in the upcoming Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) conference. His answer gave them every satisfaction: “The Vatican sees the conference as the pursuit of the efforts at reconciliation started in Helsinki and would avoid any action that could thwart it”. After the death of Paul VI, Dissemond reported the talks of his bishop, Cardinal Bengsch, with Cardinal Benelli to his controlling officer. This particular report went up as far as the First Secretary, Erich Honecker. A man close to the West German Social Democrats, Cardinal Benelli was opposed to any attempts to normalise relations between East Germany and the Church. Dissemond never felt any concern or remorse for his activities as a Stasi informer, which were revealed in 1993 by the Berlin *Tagesspiegel*. The Church hierarchy confirmed having authorised these contacts. Dissemond died in 2006.

Finally, the Stasi was not the only East German agency to run agents within the Catholic Church. The HVA, the foreign intelligence service, directed by Markus Wolf, one of the main KGB auxiliaries, was also active in the Vatican. Its records were destroyed in a panic in January 1990, but the CIA was able to lay its hands on a mass of microfilms containing dossiers on all its informers. (This just goes to show that bureaucratic zeal is often secrecy’s worst enemy.) The CIA, which had probably bought these microfilms off a fleeing officer, ended up supplying a copy to the German BND in 2003.

These archives tell us that the HVA had two prize sources in the Vatican at its disposal. The first was the Benedictine monk Brother Eugen Brammertz (the famous “Lichtblick”), recruited in 1953: he was then in Trèves (Trier) Abbey. Born in 1915, and ordained in 1939 after studying

theology, he enrolled as a medical auxiliary in the Luftwaffe. At the end of the war, he was detained by the Red Army in a POW camp. It was there that he came into contact with the NKVD. Quickly freed, he returned to Berlin. It is quite likely that from that time onwards Brammertz became a sleeping agent, without any particular assignment, but it was hoped that he would be of some use within the Church. At the beginning of the 1950s, the KGB resident in Berlin decided to transfer the handling of various agents to the HVA from 1953 onwards. The investment in Brammertz turned out to be worthwhile when his abbot agreed to send him to Rome in 1975. He went to work for the Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, as a journalist and translator. During an interview with *L'Espresso* in October 1999, the spymaster Markus Wolf described Brammertz as "one of the most brilliant priests, a member of the scientific commission and very close to Cardinal Casaroli". In the 1980s, his reports were considered "very reliable" and transmitted by the HVA to its big brother, the KGB. All jumbled up, they informed about the cardinals who were favourable or not to the Ostpolitik, and also mentioned that the Abbey of Saint Matthias in Trèves (where Brammertz lived) was used as a relay station by the CIA. Under John Paul II, "Lichtblick" was still a valuable trump card for the Eastern bloc services.

The European scene naturally focused the attention of the Eastern bloc services as well as those of the West, but it did not at all comprehend the entirety of the Vatican's shadow war with the Eastern bloc. For the Curia, the playground was worldwide and, if perchance it was to neglect certain areas, other actors within the Church were ready to take over.

9

OCTOPUS DEI

There was every chance, on paper at least, that Paul VI's pontificate would be the golden age of Opus Dei. Escrivá de Balaguer boasted that in the 1940s Montini had been the only person in the Curia to be friendly with him. Escrivá managed to persuade him that Opus Dei's "apostolate of penetration" could help fight communism in the Eastern bloc countries. And so it was that under the influence of Montini in February 1947, Pius XII proclaimed the constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, which created the notion of secular institutes in canonical law, tailor-made for the Opus Dei.

It set up its headquarters in Rome in a villa bought from an aristocrat and christened the Villa Tevere. Shortly afterwards, Escrivá de Balaguer was appointed a servant of the Papal Household, again at the instigation of Montini, making him a monsignor. Montini introduced him to a young man who at the time was chairman of the Catholic Students Federation, Giulio Andreotti, the rising star of the Christian Democrats, who was to become a fellow traveller of the Opus Dei. After the anti-communists won the election, Escrivá de Balaguer finally received his first encouragement from the CIA thanks to James Angleton, who was very much in the know. With such a godfather as pope, didn't the future of the rapidly expanding order seem guaranteed?

An irresistible ascension?

And yet Paul VI was not as keen on Opus Dei as Pius XII. It has to be said that ever since the 1960s, there had already been many criticisms of it within the Church. The harshest came from Switzerland in 1963. The theologian Urs von Balthasar showed that Opus Dei corresponded very closely to the idea of fundamentalism, a form of post-revolutionary thinking that attempted to reconstitute an alliance of spiritual and temporal power. He compared Opus Dei to the Sapinière, the Vatican's former political police of sinister memory; we will see that there were a few good reasons for this. A public controversy followed in the international Catholic press.

For Paul VI, the heart of the problem was the combination of priests and lay people in the same institution. In October 1964, he met Escrivá de Balaguer for a private audience and cautiously gave him a "letter of encouragement", which didn't commit him to anything. Until the end, the Pope remained on cordial terms while adopting a wait-and-see attitude. Let down by Paul VI's pontificate and by his supposed wooliness, Opus Dei gradually drew closer to the more conservative cardinals.

Escrivá de Balaguer thought he was living through the eruption of a rash of heresies during the political ferment of the 1960s and took on himself the mission of bringing the Church back into the way of the true faith. He quite simply thought that God had chosen Opus Dei to save the Church. Among his priorities was his fight against Marxist infiltration of the Church; he went as far as to create an index of books and Catholic authors considered harmful and deserving to be banned.

Balaguer's right-hand man, Alvaro del Portillo, suggested the creation of a centre for meetings of priests in Rome which would allow debates to be organised but also make the institution better known and appreciated. Yvon Le Vaillant, one of the first journalists to investigate Opus Dei, described it thus: "Adaptable and many-sided, Alvaro del Portillo excelled in that atmosphere so peculiar to the Vatican City and to the antechambers of the dicasteries, the Roman ministries. Ever since his first successes, he has made his way smoothly through the various echelons." And he went on to describe his staff, who seemed like senior managers: "the managing types are men who have a small suitcase in their hands all the time, toing and froing from one capital to another, […] for a thousand good reasons, of course, but which were not all of an apostolic nature. The fact that Zurich

(Switzerland) is thought to be an essential hub was just as much due to reasons of security and financial speculation as to missionary matters.[1]

Balaguer's plan was to exercise a discreet influence on key economic sectors, in particular finance and the media within the democracies. This strategy limited recruitment to the order: the most sought-after candidates were the future captains of industry, bankers, journalists and so on. Jesuit missionary proselytism was, in Balaguer's opinion, totally out of date. The recruitment of persons with "potential" and of young people from good families had a good effect on the order's finances. According to the rules, each member had to contribute as much as 10% of his annual income.

Members were recruited through student residences (there were several hundred of them), holidays and organised trips. Soon all the sons and daughters of rich families joined Opus Dei. For those who were less well-born, Opus Dei gave the promise of social mobility thanks to the assistance of its members. The typical Opus Dei profile was that of the technocrat.

In ten years, Opus Dei took over the levers of power to control Spain. Ministers, members of ministerial cabinets, bankers, company bosses and journalists: all gave each other the leg up. The 1963 ministerial reshuffle, bringing Falange soldiers together with Opus Dei members, marked a turning point. These technocrats were responsible for the development plan launched by the Spanish government in 1964. This organised industrial development under the control of the banks, without questioning the trend towards private monopolies. Opus Dei managed to raise funds successfully. The personal fortunes of members, inheritances and young girls' dowries were added to the profits of the companies controlled by its members, part of which was returned. A growing hold on society and the Spanish economy eventually earned the order its nickname of "Octopus Dei", God's octopus.

A semi-clandestine organisation

To its critics, Opus Dei was very much a pyramidal organisation, hierarchically structured, which demanded blind obedience and was intolerant of the outside world. It was criticised for recruiting minors without the consent of their families, from whom they were cut off quickly, for the wholesale indoctrination of its members, its intense proselytism, and its strategy of infiltrating the economic and political elites, not to mention

the exaggerated cult of its founder. An inspector from the Renseignements Généraux confided to Thierry Oberlé, a journalist from *Figaro*, at the beginning of the 1990s: “I am a practising Catholic and Opus Dei aroused my curiosity. I very quickly gathered that it worked on the basis of confused principles. It was attracted to money like mosquitoes are to light. Its compartmentalisation reminded me of my own job. I was struck—I still am—by its capacity to solve the problem of how to use the relationships of the people gravitating around it.”[2]

The intelligence professionals were not deceived: Opus Dei resembled a secret service, because it was one. The Villa Tevere was the nerve centre which centralised intelligence culled throughout the world by an efficient spy network. Robert Hutchinson described it thus: “The intelligence is sifted by an army of analysts who prepare reports for the permanent commissions or in some instances directly for the vicar-general. Just as the directives from Rome never go through the mails but are hand-carried by special couriers, the most confidential incoming reports are likewise not entrusted to public-access communications systems.”[3]

In the 1960s, representatives of Opus Dei were invited to the US Embassy for contacts with the CIA. “Nothing put Opus Dei off when it was a matter of investigation, clandestine penetration, collecting information, and *a fortiori* when it was attracted by the efficiency of a network like the CIA, whose means and aims were, in general, the same as its own in certain aspects. The CIA notably used Opus Dei for penetrating the Spanish and South American émigré milieu in France,” noted Le Vaillant.[4] The brother of Sánchez Bella, one of those responsible for Opus Dei in Spain, was the Spanish ambassador in Rome, in charge of Franco’s spy services in Europe.

The conquest of South America

José Ibáñez Langlois, a young priest, became Opus Dei’s first emissary on the South American continent. Two of his first recruits in the 1960s, Jaime Guzmán and Alvaro Puga, took control of the long-established Chilean daily, *El Mercurio*. At the time, the Vatican in theory backed the moderate Christian Democrat president of Chile, Eduardo Frei. But Ibáñez Langlois considered him too soft towards communist subversion and too accommodating of the trade unions. With his disciples, he created an ultra-

conservative think tank, the Institute of General Studies (IGS), so that an alternative would emerge to the right of Frei.

The social policy of Frei also attracted the hostility of President Richard Nixon, who asked the CIA to develop an alternative policy. The split among the right-wing electors, between Frei and the alternatives backed by the CIA, resulted in the victory of the left-wing candidate, Salvador Allende.

The institute became the centre of a far right-wing conspiracy to overthrow Allende with the CIA's support. The latter financed the IGS. Its members included lawyers, free-market economists and influential publishers. One of the chief members of the IGS was Hernán Cubillos, founder of *Qué Pasa*, Opus Dei's magazine, and the editor of *El Mercurio*, which was now subsidised by the CIA.[5] After the 1973 *coup d'état*, several IGS technocrats became cabinet members and advisors to Pinochet's junta. Cubillos was minister of foreign affairs.

Puga even published a book recounting the whole operation from the inside.[6] The alliance between Opus Dei and the CIA existed perhaps earlier than the Allende episode and was not limited to Chile. The South American information bulletin *Noticias Aliadas*, run by a Catholic priest, claimed in December 1975 that since 1962 Opus Dei in Chile had received money from conservative North American foundations as well as from the CIA. These subsidies enabled it to create the Sociedad Nacional de Agricultura, a union of big landowners opposed to Allende. Opus Dei also cooperated with Fatherland and Liberty, a far right-wing terrorist group aimed at overthrowing Allende, which joined forces with Pinochet's secret police.[7]

According to Pierre Abramovici, Ibáñez Langlois's other right-hand man had been mixed up in the Chilean *coup d'état*. Jaime Guzmán was a former member of Fatherland and Liberty, "who had also collaborated with the CIA via the Institute of General Studies, the promoter of the press campaign which overthrew the president, and organiser of the *coup d'état*. However, there is no way we can hold him responsible for participating in assassination or in torture."[8]

Several leaders of the institute in this way became ministers in General Pinochet's military junta. A number of his ministers also became members of Opus Dei. But the pressure of the Opus Dei technocrats in the corridors of power ended up, as it did in Spain, by evoking a reaction from the

military and the Chilean secret police, the DINA, who thought, not without reason, that in the long run Opus Dei wanted to eclipse Pinochet.

The Chilean case was far from isolated. In the 1960s and 1970s, the whole continent became the stage for a merciless war. We can mention the testimony of Father Giuliano Ferrari, Cardinal Tisserant's lay assistant at the end of the 1950s, who was ordained in 1962. Tisserant saw to it that he undertook courses at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy, the school for Vatican diplomats. At the Secretariat of State, Ferrari bumped into Archbishop Samorè, the former nuncio to Bogotà, himself close to Opus Dei. Samorè ran the first section of the Secretariat of State; he had supreme control of appointments to South America. Ferrari set himself up in Ecuador, in the port of Guayaquil, to conduct a diocesan census but had to give it up as his finances were blocked. In June 1969, he tried his luck again in El Salvador. Shortly afterwards he started suffering from headaches and his blood pressure rose dangerously, despite medical care. The symptoms disappeared each time he left San Salvador on a trip. In June 1969, the police arrested his servant and an accomplice. They were released for lack of proof, but a medical examination concluded that Ferrari had been poisoned with digitalis.[9]

In 1969, Ferrari settled in Guatemala. He discovered that the archbishopric of Guatemala City was in the hands of Opus Dei. Cardinal Mario Casariego, a fierce anti-communist, relied entirely on them for current affairs. He was a great friend of Colonel Arana, the regime's strongman. Detested by most of the priests and lay people, the cardinal was the subject of a petition demanding his expulsion from the country, but this was ignored.

With Cardinal Tisserant's death, Ferrari lost his protection. He was called to the archbishopric, where he was told that his pastoral work in the *favelas* was too politically orientated and that he had 24 hours to leave the country. Two Opus Dei priests remained with him to watch over him and put him on a plane for Switzerland. He was warned that if he set foot again in South America, his safety could not be guaranteed. After his autobiography came out, Ferrari met the British journalist Robert Hutchinson and suggested he share the files on the use of Vatican funds in South America with him. A few days later Ferrari was found dead on the

Geneva–Paris train. He seems to have suffered a heart attack, but no autopsy was carried out.[10]

Opus Dei scored successes in almost all countries. In Colombia, Opus Dei became the owner of Promec, the television company which, during the 1966 presidential campaign, supported the most conservative and pro-American candidate. In the same year, 1966, in an exchange with Colombian guerrillas, the army shot a priest, Camilo Torres.

The Catholic journalist Penny Lernoux states that the aid association Adveniat, based in Germany and run by people close to Opus Dei, took over from the CIA in the 1970s as the auxiliary of South American military regimes.[11] In Venezuela, at the time of the oil boom, several members of Opus Dei entered the government. In Peru, Opus Dei took advantage of the bourgeoisie's fear of leftist ideas put forward by Jesuit missionaries. The Jesuits were suspected of helping the guerrillas, some of whom were their former pupils. It was in Peru that the priest Gustavo Gutiérrez developed what was to be called the theology of liberation: "*El poder al pueblo*" (Power to the People). It legitimised the use of violence in the case of "violent and prolonged tyranny". In 1968 the Latin American Episcopal Conference in Medellín approved the principle of the "Church of the Poor" and implicitly criticised the position of Opus Dei for its connection with the governing classes.

It's no exaggeration to say that the South American continent thus became the terrain for a ruthless struggle for influence between an Opus Dei ready to support military juntas of the anti-communist far right and the Jesuits who, without actually being Marxists, thought it their priority to defend the most helpless in society even if it meant taking sides politically. Paul VI was careful not to choose between either of them. All would become clear during John Paul II's pontificate.

The nebulous part

Opus Dei existed within a nebulous grouping of Catholic organisations. We left the French agent Jean Violet at work in exerting influence at the Helsinki summit. Although he was no longer on the SDECE payroll, Violet remained even better connected in Catholic circles than ever.

Violet was very much present in the Vatican, dealing in particular with Mgr Giovanni Benelli, who had been well schooled in intelligence, as Montini's secretary from 1947, to deal with the underground Cold War struggle. Benelli probably met Violet in 1965, when he joined the Vatican's permanent mission at the UN. In 1967, he became the substitute, or chief of staff, of Secretary of State Cicognani, who was at the time very old, and established a direct link with Pope Paul VI, whom he saw daily. Many intelligence matters therefore went through him. Several KGB archives refer to him as a CIA controlling officer.[12]

Violet also met regularly the Spanish ambassador, Alfredo Sánchez Bella, a friend of Opus Dei, who was described as the head of General Franco's secret services in Europe. Although he kept out of the public eye, Violet associated himself with the "Pinay circle", described in a confidential note[13] by the head of Bavarian security, Hans Langemann, as an informal gathering, held twice a year, of politicians, journalists, conservative bankers and anti-communists. Within this circle, "the Parisian lawyer, M. Jean Violet, acted as a sort of manager on the French side. He took control of most of the operational management because of President Pinay's senility [*sic*]. What was more, Violet maintained his own relations with the Western secret services. For certain, on the side of the CIA, the SDECE, the British SIS and the Swiss special services, in particular with General Botta."

It is clear that Violet was one of a small core group of figures who acted behind the scenes, outside all service or political apparatuses, in order to support people like Franz Josef Strauss in Germany, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in France and Margaret Thatcher in the UK. Violet had a British opposite number who also navigated between the Western secret services, in the person of Brian Crozier. In 1979, another memo by Hans Langemann, revealed by *Der Spiegel*,[14] presented Crozier thus: "The London journalist and conservative militant Brian Crozier, the director of the re-nowned Institute for the Study of Conflict until September 1979, is nowadays trying hard with his international political circle, composed of many friends, to set up a 'trans-national security organisation' and to spread its field of activities … Crozier was a CIA collaborator for years. Moreover, for Langley, there was nothing secret about his activities. Crozier kept in touch with the most important people in authority or former people in authority in Western security and intelligence services like the Comte de Marenches, the head of

the SDECE. His good relations with the SIS (MI6) boss Dick Franks were especially well known. His close collaborator N. Elliot had been a department head in MI6."[15]

This organisation set out to publish articles that promoted its ideas in various countries, and organised conferences on the infiltration of communists in the trade unions or the KGB's support for international terrorism. It exchanged information with the various Western intelligence services. It was also capable of organising character assassination campaigns against people opposed to it. In France, after the Watergate scandal and the purge of certain elements within the CIA, Crozier became closer to the Pinay group and the DST, the French internal security arm.

Crozier found somebody interested in listening to him in the DST, at the time headed by Marcel Chalet. One wonders if that organisation hadn't also taken the place of the SDECE for Violet. It was also possible that after Giscard d'Estaing was elected to the Élysée Palace in 1974, Violet, commended by Pinay, took his orders directly from the president's entourage. The Pinay circle did after all bring together several former heads of secret services, like William Colby, the ex-director of the CIA.

One can't avoid mentioning the links this "circle" had with an organisation that one keeps coming across after the end of the war: the Order of Malta. Founded in the 11th century to provide medical and military help to pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, it held no territory outside Rome but it did benefit from having the status of a sovereign state and maintained diplomatic relations with 49 countries. In the 14th century, the order absorbed part of the Templars' wealth after contributing to the latter's downfall. It was based for a time on Rhodes before being chased off the island and settling in Malta in the 15th century, until Napoleon's invasion. After going into exile in Russia, the order finally settled in Rome in the 19th century.

Its 13 000 members were recruited from among Catholic elites throughout the world. They swore allegiance to the pope. But neither he nor the Grand Master of the Order in Rome really controlled what its members were doing in any particular country. In theory, their activities were mainly charitable. In 1927, a branch of the order was created on the east coast of the United States. Its initial members were mainly industrial and financial magnates, who would oppose Roosevelt's New Deal. In 1929 Cardinal

Spellman, present from its very beginnings, became its “grand protector”. Its access to the economic elites and heads of state on both sides of the Atlantic further reinforced its power.

In certain ways, the order became a sort of very select international “club”, bringing together American and European Catholic elites. After the war, among these were to be found the founder of the OSS, William Donovan; his ex-agent the lawyer William Casey; the future head of the CIA James Angleton; and William Colby; as well as Antoine Pinay, General Reinhard Gehlen, Giulio Andreotti and American businessmen and politicians—all united by their anti-communism.

To complete the picture, another secret organisation must be mentioned: the Pan-European Union, under Otto von Habsburg, the heir to the Austrian throne. The archduke, born in 1912, had experienced the last years of the Empire and was close to Alfredo Sánchez Bella, with whom he established the CEDI (the European Documentation and Information Centre), a fiercely anti-communist pan-European lobby. It sponsored a think tank, the Académie Européenne de Sciences Politiques, based in Brussels and run by a Belgian, Florimond Damman. With the latter’s intervention, Violet gradually took over the academy. He also became closer to the leader of the Christian Social Union, Franz Josef Strauss, a colourful figure in the powerful German right wing, who was regularly in the news because of his ranting and raving and various shady deals. Close to Bavarian employers, he had a reputation for financing various small groups on the far right.

After 1974, the influence of Giscard’s followers increased in the Brussels academy, which tried to broadcast the testimonies of dissidents like Sakharov. It served also as a screen for more secret activity, such as support for Portuguese conservative forces at the time of the “Carnation Revolution”, with no great results. It kept a file of a thousand or so European figures who sympathised with its ideas.

The academy had contacts in the principal European secret services: in its records were to be found, apart from Father Dubois, the names of Julian Amery and Brian Crozier from MI6 and Lothar Lohrisch of the Portuguese PIDE, as well as German agents, a former OSS agent, and another from the services of NATO.[16]

Through these various movements a range of political tendencies were expressed: royalist, presidential, liberal, extremist; but all were tied together

by the same anti-communism. To this must be added an excessive liking for intrigue and scandals.

10

THE MONSIGNOR'S EXPLOSIVES

"The Jews didn't recognise Our Lord.
As a result, we cannot recognise
the Jewish people."

Pius X to Theodor Herzl

"Jerusalem, Aug. 18—Archbishop Hilarion Capucci, the head of the Greek Catholic Church in Jerusalem, was arrested by Israeli police today and charged with smuggling weapons and explosives to Palestinian guerrillas operating on the occupied West Bank. The 52-year-old bishop, who was born and raised in Syria, was seized at 7 a.m. at his home outside the Jerusalem suburbs. A police spokesman said that large quantities of weapons and explosives had been found hidden in his Mercedes sedan earlier this month after he had returned from a visit to Lebanon. The police charged that the Archbishop had been acting as the undercover liaison man between Al Fatah, the largest of the Palestinian guerrilla organizations, and Palestinian guerrilla cells on the West Bank […] A source close to the investigation said that the Archbishop had been associated with the abortive incident last May during a visit by Secretary of State Kissinger in which three Katyusha rockets were aimed at the center of Jerusalem."[1]

The Vatican's Palestinian about-turn

An eminence in prison charged with arms trafficking: the news caused a shock in the Vatican when it came out right in the middle of the torpor of high summer in 1974. First of all, who was Hilarion Capucci? Born in 1922 in Aleppo in Syria, which was under French control at the time, Capucci was ordained in 1947 and appointed as head of the minuscule Greek Catholic Melkite community in Jerusalem, which numbered some 4 500 Christians, most of them Arabs. This church recognised the primacy of the pope in matters of faith but followed the Byzantine rite in matters of liturgy and clerical discipline. As a religious leader, the archbishop could cross the Israeli–Lebanese border without being inspected. This did not prevent the Israeli services from keeping an eye on him, because the *bon vivant* made no secret of where his sympathies lay.

Capucci was freed on parole a few hours after his arrest, but he was rearrested a few days later. He was the most senior Christian dignitary ever accused of such crimes by Israel. His arrest made the front pages of the newspapers. The PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, described the arrest as a “terrible crime”. More soberly, the Vatican announced its “great sadness”. The archbishop’s superior, Maximos Hakim, the Greek Melkite Patriarch of Antioch, went to Rome to consult with Paul VI.

The Israeli authorities remained unperturbed: Capucci was charged with being in contact with foreign agents and illegally transporting arms. As the archbishop’s trial approached, there was a new development. The Israeli Army announced it had foiled an Arab terrorist plot aimed at freeing the archbishop from prison. A judge rejected a claim on the archbishop’s behalf of diplomatic immunity, indicating that Israel had no diplomatic relations with the Vatican. On 9 December 1974, Capucci was sentenced to twelve years’ imprisonment. But that was not the end of the story.

On 28 June 1976, some Palestinians hijacked an Air France aircraft on the Tel Aviv–Paris run, taking it to Entebbe in Uganda. They demanded that Israel free 40 prisoners, including Archbishop Capucci. A week later, Israeli commandos launched an attack on the aircraft at Entebbe airport, in an operation which has become famous.[2] The following year Mgr Capucci’s imprisonment was almost at an end when the new Likud government said it was prepared to free him if the Vatican made an official request.[3] Capucci was put on a plane to Rome, where he was welcomed at the airport by a PLO delegation.

One doesn’t realise nowadays what a chasm there was between the Vatican and the State of Israel in the early years of its establishment. When the State of Israel was created, the Holy See pretended to ignore the UN resolutions so it could concentrate on its priority—internationalising Jerusalem. But the Arab–Israeli war following the foundation of the Jewish State reminded the world that a quarter of the conflict’s Palestinian victims were Christians. In 1949, Israel’s decision to make Jerusalem its capital ended by pushing the Holy See into its opponents’ camp. The Church increased its pressure on Catholic states that were members of the UN so as to prevent Israel from being admitted to that body—but without success. In 1964, Paul VI’s visit to the Holy Land in 1954 changed nothing. The Israelis sought to have him recognise the Jewish State, even implicitly, but the Pope was careful not to give them “any consideration that was not of a purely spiritual nature”. However, the Six Day War, in 1967, propelled the Church into starting talks with Israel about the future of the Holy Land and the position of Christians in Israel.

The Secretariat of State was therefore pro-Palestinian, even if the people responsible always expressed themselves cautiously. Israel’s Mossad team present in Europe kept an eye on the comings and goings of Palestinians in Paris and in Rome. With indignation it saw certain Vatican prelates meeting with Arab businessmen or even important PLO people at Roman soirées. It has to be said that the latter moved about Italy as they wished. The Italian service had made a deal with the PLO: no attacks on Italian interests, in exchange for which they would not look too closely at the comings and goings of the PLO leaders. This agreement would not have been approved if it hadn’t been a duplicate of the one agreed between the PLO and the CIA, to protect American interests.[4] So the Israelis had to break this Catholic–Palestinian front.

Mossad offers its services

In 1979, a plan for internationalising Jerusalem under the supervision of the United Nations was doing the rounds of diplomatic circles. According to the proposal, the Vatican would take charge of the Christian holy places. One can imagine where such a scheme came from. Indignant, the Israeli prime minister, Menachem Begin, sent for the head of Mossad, Yitzak Hofi, and

ordered him to find a way of getting the Vatican to move in a direction that was more favourable to Israel's interests.[5] This wasn't the first time.

Already in 1972, Pope Paul VI had agreed to meet the prime minister, Golda Meir. The audience, planned for 15 January 1973, was not to be announced in advance. The head of Mossad, Zvi Zamir, was sent to Rome to prepare the visit and ensure proper security was in place. The dissident group of the PLO, Black September, which had just drawn attention to itself by murdering Jewish athletes at the Munich 1972 Olympic Games, was informed that Golda Meir would probably visit Rome, news of which had spread among pro-Palestinian prelates. The group's leader, Ali Hassan Salameh, thought he'd attack the prime minister's plane with rocket launchers when it landed. Salameh was on a Mossad list of targets to be eliminated, a list personally approved by Golda Meir.

On 14 January 1974, a Mossad informer employed in the telephone exchange in Rome intercepted two calls in Arabic announcing the coming delivery of "candles in preparation for the birthday". This coded phrase designated Soviet-made missiles that Black September was sending to Italy by boat from Yugoslavia. Zamir went to Rome at once to meet those responsible for Italian internal security, the DIGOS.[6] The two services had no clues and no leads to follow. A few hours before Golda Meir's arrival, Zamir decided to put the airport neighbourhood under surveillance.

The following day, at dawn, the Mossad men spotted a small Fiat truck. When they approached it, two terrorists in the back opened fire but were soon themselves wounded. The driver fled but was caught, tied up and questioned. After a brutal interrogation, he ended by admitting there was a second firing position. Following his indications, the Israelis spotted another truck, with an open roof, near the runway.

They no longer had time to attack it, so they decided to ram it with their own vehicle. The violence of the shock caused the vehicle to overturn and the terrorists inside were knocked out when their own missiles fell on them. So as not to compromise Golda Meir's visit to the Pope, Mossad did not kill the members of the commando on the spot. They were admitted to a hospital and were then allowed to go to Libya. This did not prevent Mossad from keeping a close eye on them and then killing them one by one a few months later.

It wasn’t before the second decade of John Paul II’s pontificate that the pro-Palestine line changed (with the recognition of Israel by the Vatican in December 1993). In the meantime, a new emissary, more discreet than Capucci, was sent by Rome. In Beirut or Tunis, Father Ibrahim Iyad became the link between the Pope and the PLO. This short (5 ft 1 in) man in a threadbare cassock went up and down the Muslim quarter of Jerusalem meeting all the warring factions. He helped Arafat to draft his letters to the Pope and his greetings cards for Christmas. He served also as a chaperon for Cardinal Casaroli when he met the PLO’s foreign affairs minister. Throughout the world, the Pope’s nuncios were instructed to support Palestinian national aspirations.

11

SETTING THE CAT AMONG THE PIGEONS

In the 1960s, the gates of the Vatican were locked at 23.30. A resident who wanted to enter afterwards had to ask for authorisation and a pass. But when at midnight one night in the spring of 1969 a black Mercedes turned up at the gate, the Swiss Guards opened the barrier without even asking the driver for his identity papers

Michele Sindona had an appointment with Pope Paul VI. This meeting did not appear in his diary. It was not a courtesy visit but a crisis meeting. In 1962 a tax on dividends had been introduced in Italy; this created concern in the Vatican, which had invested heavily on the stock exchange. A tax exemption was granted and then challenged. As a last resort, the Pope appealed to the famous financier Sindona to sort out the situation. In 1964, the Italian stock exchange was depressed. Sindona thought that the government could not hold out against a massive sale of shares from the Vatican’s portfolio. Outstanding debts, thought to amount to several hundred millions of dollars, were accumulating. The matter was raised regularly in the press. In 1969, a more solid government took office, which made the Vatican decide that it had better pay its taxes. It was at that moment that Paul VI called in the famous Italian financier, Michele Sindona, to assist.

Sindona suggested that the Vatican withdraw totally from the Italian market and invest in offshore eurodollar entities. This was tantamount to asking the Pope to entrust him, Sindona, with the discretionary management of several billion dollars' worth of Church capital. That evening, if the testimony of Sindona is to be believed,[1] the financier was given total control over the Vatican's foreign investments. He would be working hand in hand with the new strongman of the IOR, Bishop Paul Marcinkus. But he would still be the decision-maker. Sindona emerged from this audience with the Pope with a new feeling of power: he was from now on the Pope's banker.

Banker of God, banker to the Devil

Michele Sindona was born in 1920 in Patti, Sicily, to the east of Messina. In 1908, 90% of the town was destroyed in an earthquake. Because Sindona's mother's health was precarious, he was brought up by his grandmother Nunziata, whom he worshipped. His grandfather Michele was a shopkeeper who lent money to his customers to rebuild their houses after the quake. He died in 1914. The family was highly regarded in the region. Even if they became poorer after her husband's death, Nunziata acted as a sort of "wise woman" in the town of Patti.

In 1938, after turning 18, Michele obtained a scholarship to study at the University of Messina. He graduated in tax law in 1942. During his studies, he worked part-time for a bank, the Credito Italiano. He later started work in a tax office. In his free time, he kept the books for a lemon producer.

On 10 July 1943, the Allies landed in Sicily with the help of the Mafia. Young Michele got hold of a truck and started trading: first of all, lemons, which he traded for flour, thereafter all sorts of goods. It was then that, despite his later denials, he began his association with the Mafia. In Sicily, it would have been impossible to undertake an independent business without them.

The link was made, surprisingly for us, but naturally for the Sicilians of the time, by the intercession of the Bishop of Patti, who contacted Vito Genovese. This man was highly placed in the American Mafia, which was then helping the US Army to organise first its landings, then its advance. Genovese asked his colleagues in the Cosa Nostra and his US officer

friends to provide the young Sindona with false papers, a safe conduct and fresh produce for his trade. Each time he arrived in the town of Patti, sounding his hooter, with his truck laden with supplies, Sindona was welcomed as a hero. During this period he forged solid, lasting friendships with the American officers and within the Mafia.

In 1944, Sicily was completely liberated. Michele opened a tax advisor's office in Messina and built up a clientele. His business was doing well but he already wanted more. A lawyer friend offered to set him up in Milan, the nerve centre of Italian post-war reconstruction. He arrived with a recommendation to the local clergy from his bishop. At the time the Sicilians were looked down on by Milanese society, but Sindona's skin was light and he spoke polished Italian, which meant he was accepted. To make himself known, he ran a column of legal advice in a local newspaper. Unlike other lawyers, Sindona specialised in giving tax advice to individuals and companies. Clients very soon poured into his office. For the owners of small businesses who could not pay for his services, Sindona suggested that he be paid with shares in their companies.

With the Bishop of Messina's intercession, Sindona was introduced to an important person in the Vatican: Mgr Amleto Tondini, who himself introduced Sindona to Massimo Spada, an IOR director at the end of his career. In 1948, the Pope wanted to invest the Church's liquid endowments, repatriated partly from the United States, in the reconstruction of Italy. Montini entrusted the project to Spada.

In November 1954, Montini was appointed Archbishop of Milan, where the Italian Communist Party reigned supreme. Montini wanted to persuade the workers to return to the fold of the Church and the Christian Democrats. In January 1955, a trade union leader barred him from saying Mass inside the factories. Michele Sindona helped Montini by bringing in some "muscle" to make sure celebrating the service was safe. The two men got into the habit of visiting factories together. Montini was very attentive to workers' problems. His job of undermining communism began to bear fruit: the Christian Democrats won back votes from within the trade unions.

At the beginning of 1959, Montini got in touch with Sindona again. According to the evidence of a priest who took part in their meetings, "Montini had been intrigued with Sindona ever since Sindona helped the archbishop win the support of the workers in Milan. So when Montini needed $2 million to build a home for the elderly, he again turned to

Sindona."[2] Sindona didn't waste time. The sum was found in a single day. It was either money that came from the Milanese captains of industry who contributed to the archbishop's project (but in this case, why not say so?) or it was a question of secret funds. Today it is clear Sindona had contacts with the CIA even before this period.

In an interview for the Italian news magazine *Panorama*, the former CIA agent Victor Marchetti stated that "in the 1950s and 1960s the CIA gave economic support to many activities promoted by the Catholic Church, from orphanages to missions. [It involved] millions of dollars each year, [handed out] to a great number of bishops and monsignors. One of them was Cardinal Giovanni Montini. It is possible that Cardinal Montini did not know where the money was coming from. He may have thought that it came from friends."[3]

In 1959 Sindona entered a new league of business operations. His office was one of the biggest in Italy. And he worked now from a luxury hotel suite. He was the friend of Archbishop Montini and, through Spada's intercession, he was on friendly terms with the big financiers and captains of industry in America. He helped an American business, the Crucible Steel Company of America, to purchase companies in Italy. In return, one of its heads, Dan Porco, helped Sindona with his American business. When the Vatican wanted to acquire a Milanese bank, Montini suggested that Spada give the job to Sindona: this was the purchase by the IOR of the Banca Privata Finanziaria (BPF). For the deal, the Holy See came in with Sindona on a 60/40 basis. He was now in the big league. In sum, Sindona took control of all the shares. He even recruited Spada, who was then having trouble with Cardinal Di Jorio, chairman of the IOR. To diversify, he bought real estate in Canada for himself and for the Vatican. His holding company, Fasco, was set up in Switzerland.

One of the sources of Sindona's fortune came from the exchange market. Italian law forbade the export of lire and imposed a 30% tax on distributed profits where the owners of the shares were unknown to the tax authorities. Sindona, the owner of banks in Switzerland and Italy, was among those who assisted people in tax evasion. Through the BPF and the Vatican Bank, funds could be taken out of Italy and recovered in Switzerland and invested abroad. Owning an American bank made the

system even more effective. It took Sindona another ten years or so before achieving that particular objective.

The Pope and the people at the IOR were fascinated by Sindona, who introduced them to the underworld, at the same time allowing them to demonstrate their religious faith and irreproachable anti-communism. One can get an idea of this from Nick Tosches's book, from his interviews carried out in prison.[4]

The book is full of self-justifications and denials of much of the evidence, but from time to time Sindona recovered his former vitality and explained the workings of the financial world, which he knew by heart:

> To launder relatively small amounts of dirty money—up to $150 million a year, say—all you have to do is to set up a bearer-bond company in tax-haven country. You deposit your dirty money in the account of the company. The company is protected by secrecy laws, so that nobody knows the company is you. Then you draw up a consultancy agreement or an employment contract between you and the company, providing the terms of payment for some imaginary services. You have those payments made to you accordingly, and that's that: hidden money becomes laundered money […]
>
> People who operate legal importing businesses in addition to their illegal activities use the "double-invoicing" system. Through his bearer-share company, the importer anonymously buys goods from a legitimate foreign seller at, say, $2 a pound [weight]. He then buys those same goods from himself—that is, from the bearer-share company—for, say, $1.80 a pound. The 20 cents-per-pound difference becomes a legal profit for the importer, while dirty money he owns in the name of the bearer-share company is cleansed by passing to the loss side of its profit-and-loss account.
>
> This was basically the system by which the Italian Communist Party financed itself in the years after World War II. Selected Italian commercial houses—I found out about them because some of them were clients of mine—were, with a nod from the party, granted the right to sell certain Russian products by that country. The Russian government factories invoiced as in transit, and therefore beyond customs controls, to Liechtenstein companies belonging to Italians, goods at, say, $2 a kilogram when the market price was really $3 a kilogram. The intermediary company then invoiced the goods to the appointed Italian company at $2.80 a kilogram, and gave the 80-cent profit to a shell company owned by the ICP. For its services, the

> Italian company enjoyed a greater than usual profit of 20 cents per kilogram. The fiscal authorities in Italy were aware of what was going on, but they turned a blind eye to it.

Sindona became a money-laundering specialist on the Asian markets of Hong Kong and Singapore, using a similar principle. He could not resist the pleasure of "squealing on" one of the cogs of this system: "Your government ought perhaps to bring up the question with Mr Colby, the former head of the CIA, who is now an adviser for the Singapore government."[5] There was a hushed silence.

One can understand how Sindona was able to appear as a financial magician to the Italian bosses: he was a past master in the art of explaining how one can play with red lines without actually, technically, crossing them.

* * *

In 1967, on the advice of Sindona, the Pope created the Amministrazione del Patrimonio della Sede Apostolica (APSA, or Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See), to deal with the Church's real estate and pay Vatican salaries. In addition, Sindona suggested helping the Church to disinvest from the Italian economy and move into the international sphere, where one could do better business with the added bonus of total discretion.

At the beginning of 1968, a little scandal illustrated the value of his advice. It was learnt in the press that the Vatican held shares in Serono, a pharmaceutical laboratory which made contraceptives, and also in an arms manufacturer. This type of embarrassment had to be avoided. After hesitating a good deal, Paul VI decided to follow Sindona's plan. For this reason he came to be known as the "Pope's banker", empowered to manage all transactions. This was the moment of his consecration.

But what Paul VI didn't know was that Sindona was also the banker for the Mafia. On 2 November 1957, a meeting of big Sicilian and American mafiosi was held at the Grand Hotel et des Palmes in Palermo. They had chosen Sindona as their confidential financier, and his remit was to invest the Mafia's money in legitimate businesses throughout the world. Present there were Joseph Bonanno and his right-hand man Carmine Galante, Lucky Luciano, and representatives from the Genovese, Lucchese and Gambino families, as well as the heroin trafficker Tommaso Buscetta, a

future *pentito* (penitent gangster), thanks to whom we know about this meeting.[6] They decided to entrust Sindona with part of their revenue from the heroin trade, with a free hand to launder it and make it grow.

In 1969, Sindona found himself therefore in the extraordinary situation of managing funds both for "God" and for "the Devil", while at the same time being the channel of communication for the millions of dollars of finance, authorised by the Nixon administration, that was destined for the Christian Democrats and the Italian far-right movements who were plotting to overthrow the Republic,[7] as we will see later on. In that situation, who would not feel invincible?

Sindona worked a lot with the IOR, profiting from its status of best offshore bank in the world; it bought and sold companies controlled by the Vatican. The Holy See became a partner in the banks he bought and well beyond that. A journalist was to note: "One never really knew when Sindona brought off one of his spectacular deals in Italy, whether it was for the Vatican, for himself or a bit of both."[8]

Sindona transferred his portfolio of Vatican shares to his Luxembourg holding company. He sold off some of the anonymous shares on the Italian market and reinvested the tax-free profits in shares in big American companies. The Sicilian used some of the Vatican money to buy another bank, the Banca di Messina, and a water supply company. In particular, he bought up the Vatican shares in the giant real estate conglomerate SGI (Società Generale Immobiliare). He speculated a great deal on the Italian markets.

The IOR itself used a Swiss bank, Finabank, to speculate on the exchange market. At the BPF, held jointly by the IOR and Sindona, illegal transactions in foreign exchange, involving the hidden export of capital, took place every day. Shareholders' equity in the BPF and clients' deposits were transferred illegally to a company in the Sindona group, which transferred them to the IOR, which in turn transferred them to the Finabank, where the sums were held at the disposal of Sindona, who could then shop and enlarge his empire. Nothing would have been possible without the obliging attitude, not to say the complicity, of the IOR and its chairman.

The new "Monsignor Precious"

Born in 1922 in Cicero (a suburb of Chicago), Paul Marcinkus was the youngest son of a Lithuanian immigrant. He was ordained at 25. His archbishop sent him to Rome to study canonical law. After a time of pastoral work in his native town, he was sent back to Rome, where he joined the Secretariat of State. This American with the build of a rugby player had a blunt style, very different from the stuffy Italians. He was not averse to earthly pleasures: he was to be seen in the best restaurants and became a familiar figure in the Acqua Santa Golf Club, which brought together a snobbish and frivolous coterie, a mix of nouveaux riches and old nobility. Marcinkus was chosen in 1962 by John XXIII as an interpreter to welcome the First Lady of the United States, Jacqueline Kennedy. This enabled him to establish links with the American delegation. During the Second Vatican Council, he was given the task of welcoming the American bishops and cardinals. At the time Montini was on good terms with Marcinkus: he made him his secretary for Anglo-American affairs.

In 1965, Marcinkus went with Paul VI on his trip to the United States to meet President Johnson. When the Pope decided to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the Secretariat of State needed to send an English-speaking organiser, of a practical nature and in good health. This was Marcinkus. During the trip, he protected the frail Paul VI from the jubilant crowds with his huge frame. This earned him the nickname of the “Pope’s gorilla”. Other trips followed. Each time, Marcinkus found his way around, talked about security problems with the local police, and showed he was attentive to the slightest details concerning the Pope’s comfort. He quickly made himself indispensable to the point of being regarded as a full-time member of the “Milanese mafia” surrounding Paul VI. Marcinkus got on splendidly with Macchi, the Pope’s secretary. It was through Macchi that he met the financier Sindona.

With the death of Spellman, Marcinkus saw an opportunity to become the Church’s great financier. Until his end, Spellman continued sending considerable sums to the Vatican. How could the loss of these contributions be made up? Marcinkus boasted to Macchi of his connections with the American financial community: they were highly exaggerated, but that didn’t matter. At the end of 1967, he was named general secretary of the IOR and became a bishop at the beginning of 1969. He had no banking experience, but that was no problem: he simply went on a course. Marcinkus did not allow his new job to prevent him from still managing his

superior’s trips. He continued to accompany the Pope on his travels and protected him when there were several incidents: stone-throwing in Sardinia, and, above all, an attempt on his life in Manila on 27 November 1970. As he was greeting the authorities, the cardinals and bishops, so Pasquale Macchi relates in his memoirs, the Pope was attacked by a Bolivian painter, Benjamín Mendoza y Amor, 35, dressed as a priest, and holding a gold crucifix in one hand and, in the other, hidden by a cloth, a *kriss* (a wavy-bladed Malayan dagger). He wounded the Pope with a blow to the neck, fortunately protected by his stiff dog collar, and with another blow to the chest near the heart. Macchi and Marcinkus intervened and the police overpowered the assailant.

* * *

The year 1971 marked his consecration: Marcinkus became the chairman of the IOR. For four years, he had had all the time to become familiar with the secrets of the bank, and to consider the unique powers that they gave their director. Michele Sindona revealed in crude, precise terms what made the institution valuable at that time:

> If you wish, you can go right now to Milan or Rome with $1 million or $10 million in cash, with me or some other Italian who knows his way around. In a matter of minutes we would find any number of persons or organizations offering us their services to transfer the money abroad, *in nero*, without risk. Ten minutes later, you would have confirmation that your money has been credited to you, in the currency of your choice, in Switzerland, Austria or the Bahamas, minus a service fee.
>
> The pope’s bank, the IOR, had been involved in such services since its founding […]
>
> The Banca d’Italia and the other authorities never interfered, as they were convinced that the Holy See, if pressed, would respond that being a sovereign foreign government, it was not under obligation to furnish any information to Italy.
>
> I know these questions very well, because the IOR acted in this capacity for clients of my Banca Privata and Banca Unione.
>
> Bishop Marcinkus, once he came to understand it, believed that the system used by the IOR to export funds was the “perfect crime”. Later, the legislature of Italy made the unauthorized export a penal, rather than a civil, crime. From New York, I advised Marcinkus to

immediately suspend the Vatican's illegal currency transferrals. I told him that if representatives of the Vatican were ever dragged into the courts as accomplices in black-money crimes found themselves one day in the law courts as accessories to financial crimes—something that the Italian government would dearly love—the prestige of the IOR, and of the papacy itself, would never recover. But Marcinkus believed himself to be beyond the reach of the law. He continued to pursue profits that he had flaunted to the pope as proof of his competence and worth, and that he hoped would bring him the scarlet biretta.[9]

12

THE PUPPET MASTER

The following scene took place in a luxurious Tuscan villa hidden by a forest and surrounded by a high wall. Each reception room was paved with marble and furnished with antique furniture. The walls were decorated with gold leaf mouldings. On the walls were portraits of Mussolini, Hitler and Perón. In the biggest room, guarded by two men, twelve people had donned satin robes and black hoods. Seated on leather-covered chairs, around a marble-topped conference table, were the main disciples of the Grand Master, the only one who appeared bare-faced. Licio Gelli spoke:

“Are you prepared to die in order to preserve the secrets of Propaganda Due?”

“I am.”

“Do you have the necessary quality of contempt for danger?”

“I do.”

“Do you have the necessary quality of courage?”

“I am courageous.”

“Do you proclaim yourself an anti-communist?”

“I do.”

“Are you prepared to fight and perhaps face shame, even death, so that we, who may become your brothers, can destroy this government and form a presidency?”

“I am.”

At that moment, the applicant had to pronounce the “eternal oath”. Each of the hooded men placed a drop of blood in a goblet, in which Gelli put a burning match. Gelli hit the table three times with his axe. The twelve men lifted their axes, then in turn hit the table and finally put down their axes. They formed a circle around their new “brother”.

The description we have of this chilling initiation ceremony of P2 was made by Lieutenant Colonel Rossi, who committed suicide a few weeks later.[1] Gelli only used the ceremony for important occasions, to impress some recruits.

P2

In 1964, at a meeting of company heads, Michele Sindona met Licio Gelli, recently appointed Grand Master of the Propaganda Due Masonic Lodge, or P2. He was a distinguished man of medium height, with silver hair. His charisma was acknowledged by all. Gelli made P2 the most violent and most powerful secret organisation in all contemporary Italy. Generals, directors of the Italian intelligence services, magistrates (including the public prosecutor of Milan, who later became the president of a Supreme Court chamber), politicians, businessmen, and even some cardinals and archbishops were all to be found there. A former agent of the CIA described P2 as a “clandestine state within the state”.[2] Its aim was to overthrow parliamentary democracy and set up a dictatorial presidential authority.

Gelli inspired fear in its members and reigned alone. He divided his lodge into separate sections, which were not allowed to speak to each other. If you were not part of P2, there was no way of knowing who was a member. Thanks to his contacts within the intelligence services, Gelli accumulated files on all sorts of figures who could turn out to be useful. To recruit someone, he was content with just sending his target a compromising file accompanied by a card on which was simply written “P2”. This was enough. Blackmail and bribes were part of his daily tools. Gelli was detested by many people, but very few would dare to counter him.

Despite their notable differences (Gelli had been a Fascist, but not Sindona; he was antisemitic whereas Sindona supported Israel), both men

were natural allies: both were fiercely anti-communist and thought that a few gifted men could do great things together. Sindona saw his interest in joining the P2 lodge.

* * *

Licio Gelli was born in 1919 in Tuscany. He grew up under Fascism (he claimed that he was a Fascist right to the end of his life) and left school at 17 to join the Black Shirts and fight in Spain alongside Franco. In 1943 he was a liaison officer with an SS division. After Mussolini was overthrown, he joined the Salo Fascist Republic. During the last months of the war, however, he became an informer for the communist resistance fighters, thereby saving his skin. While the partisans were getting ready at the Liberation to shoot him for collaborating with the Nazis, an officer intervened and had his sentence quashed. All his life, Gelli showed how immensely opportunistic he was and knew how to navigate his way from one side to the other. In this troubled period, he still found time to organise various operations, including the transfer to Italy of some of the Yugoslavian gold seized by the Ustasha. According to an account given by Gelli himself, he thought of placing the ingots in wagons, covered with straw, and laying typhoid victims on them. The convoy bearing the Red Cross crossed the border without any problems.

After October 1944, he worked with the CIC (Counter Intelligence Corps) of the US Fifth Army. Shortly after the Liberation, Gelli settled in Rome, becoming the parliamentary assistant to a Christian Democratic member. He learned the art of Italian politics: knowing how to advise, making the right telephone call, reminding everyone of a debt contracted in the past.

He was not long in developing a direct relationship with Giulio Andreotti. In the same period, he also met up with James Angleton. He settled in northern Italy and set up a business in mattresses and clothes. Thanks to the minister of defence, Andreotti, his mattress company, Permaflex, obtained a fabulous contract to equip NATO forces in Europe. Why such a favour? Very simply because Gelli was part of the Gladio network. At the end of his life, he even boasted he’d been one of its driving forces. The businessman’s address book became ever thicker and at the beginning of the 1970s he wooed the Argentine ex-dictator, Juan Perón, in

exile in Spain. He used his influence on him and became his personal adviser.

In 1963, Gelli joined a masonic lodge of the Grand Orient and after only a few months he was given permission to create a new lodge reserved for the elite. It took the name of Propaganda Due, which derived from the beginning of the 18th century with the birth of a secret society, the Carbonari, who were organised in lodges like the Freemasons. They opposed Napoleon's occupation of Italy and elsewhere, and recruited throughout Europe. In the initiation ceremony, the applicant was promised "a sure and violent death" if he betrayed the society. The presence of mafiosi among them made the threat very credible.

Gelli's conversion to Freemasonry was all the more surprising because the Freemasons were persecuted under Mussolini. But his candidature posed no problem and the support of the Grand Orient helped to have his name cleared by the Italian Anti-Fascist Commission, which up till then had been accusing him of war crimes. Officially Gelli only became Grand Master in 1974, but from 1964–5 he was already its undisputed leader.

* * *

Within P2, Gelli took up with an influential Catholic businessman, Umberto Ortolani, who bore the entirely honorary title of Gentleman of His Holiness. He was close to Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro of Bologna. Ortolani settled in Uruguay, where he established a bank, the Bafisud. Gelli turned P2 into a club where favours were exchanged. Each favour received via the P2 Lodge created a debt, which would be paid off with another favour. What was P2's political project? First of all, to win over the support of the chief military commanders. Then to destabilise the Italian economy: take currency out of the country and convert it into dollars and Swiss francs, reinvest them in Italy, and take control of all strategic industrial assets, whose profits would in turn be exported clandestinely. This was Sindona's role. And, finally, to create chaos throughout the country with a wave of violent acts: bombing attacks and kidnappings. All that would then be needed was to disseminate propaganda aimed at preparing people's minds for the future dictator.

Gianfranco relates that Licio Gelli turned his suite in the Hotel Excelsior in Rome into a small Masonic office. He had the use of an apartment with two separate entrances. As with surgeries specialising in

sexual problems, clients would never run into each other. A hotel porter had a list of appointments for the day. He would discreetly follow the various comings and goings, in order to avoid any overlap.[3] When the Grand Orient realised how much Gelli had corrupted Masonic intentions, the lodge threw him out, but this didn't bother him very much.

With the support of Masonic networks, Gelli prospered: he travelled a lot on the other side of the Iron Curtain, and even in Libya, in order to negotiate contracts on behalf of Perón and for himself. Gelli had an international network. In the United States, the Republican priest Philip Guarino invited him to Reagan's inauguration ceremonies. But above all he had a presence in South America. Gelli was almost at home in Argentina. He became Perón's advisor. When Perón came back to power in 1973, Gelli was by his side and Perón treated him with the greatest respect. This regard was not lost on Giulio Andreotti, who represented Italy at the ceremony. Gelli received Argentine diplomatic status. In particular, he looked after the supply of arms to the country. But Perón died in 1974 and, when the military junta forced his widow to leave power in 1976, Gelli adapted and became the friend of Admiral Massera, the head of the Navy. With his approval, he negotiated the purchase of frigates from Italcantieri, the Italian naval shipbuilders.

In a few years Gelli had made a fortune. He was now the owner of several luxurious villas in northern Italy, where he entertained high society.

The strategy of tension

If we look at the timeline, Gelli's ascendancy and that of the P2 lodge both began precisely at the time of the Solo Plan, when Italy was on the brink of a *coup d'état*. The parliamentary inquiry into the P2 lodge concluded that Gelli had assuredly worked for the Italian intelligence services. This was the only way to explain the protection from which he had benefited ever since the end of the war and the favours he had been accorded throughout his career.[4] P2's objective had therefore nothing to do with Masonic aims but rather was one of preventing the Italian Communist Party from coming to power in Italy by any and all means and reducing its influence in the country.

In 1965, the coordinator of Gladio, Renzo Rocca, organised a congress that brought together the leaders of Gladio and the entire anti-communist far right, on the theme of defending Italy against communism by “armed counter-revolution”. Quite plainly, recourse to violence could not be excluded. Indeed, one could see terrorism developing in parallel, both on the far right and on the far left, which would create what were to be called the “years of lead”. The sequence of events opened with a bomb attack on Piazza Fontana in Milan in December 1969, leaving 17 dead and 88 injured. The attack was at first attributed to the far left, but the Italian police’s investigation implicated a neo-fascist terrorist group, Ordine Nuova. In court, one of the accused, Giovanni Ventura, stated that he was affiliated to the CIA. Thirty years after the attack, General Giandello Maletti, the former head of Italian counter-espionage, declared under oath that the attack had been committed by the Gladio networks on the order of the CIA.

A few months before the attack, Richard Nixon entered the White House. Through General Alexander Haig, the Under-Secretary of State, and Graham Martin, the ambassador to Rome, Nixon followed Italian affairs very closely. He knew Michele Sindona, who had made use of his services as a lawyer in the 1960s. Nixon appointed Henry Cabot Lodge as his personal representative to the Pope. During his first audience, he was asked by the Sovereign Pontiff to request the CIA to stop recruiting priests as informers.

The Americans’ concern was then at its highest. During the 1968 Italian elections, the Christian Democrats were beaten narrowly by an alliance between the Italian Communist Party and the Italian Socialist Party, while in the streets student demonstrations opposing the war in Vietnam were on the increase. The channels were therefore wide open for financial support. For the single year of 1970, Sindona’s banks received $10 million, which was paid over to P2, which in turn paid it over to various far-right activist groups.[5]

It was in this context that another attempt at a *coup d’état* took place, in December 1970, led by Prince Borghese. This Fascist hero, whom Angleton had rehabilitated after the war, founded the Fronte Nazionale movement in 1968, which recruited mainly among those nostalgic for Mussolini. Its officers’ meeting place in Rome served as the hub for its attempt at a putsch, reinforced by 200 men from the Avanguardia Nazionale movement, led by Stephano Delle Chiaie. (In the complex universe of the Italian far

right, Delle Chiaie was without doubt one of the shadiest characters of his time, mixing shamelessly terrorist action, drugs and arms trafficking together with services to the South American dictatorships.)[6]

Delle Chiaie's and Borghese's armed troops were convinced they were acting with the support of three army regiments, police units and the Carabinieri, not to mention NATO forces that were ready to intervene. The conspirators were supposed to take control of the Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs and Defence, as well as the parliament and the RAI (TV and radio). President Saragat had to be captured; the Chief of Police, considered unreliable, was to be eliminated. Trade union leaders and left-wing political leaders were to be arrested and confined on an island to the north of Sicily.

But when the day came, nothing went according to plan. One group did manage to get into the Ministry of the Interior with the help of accomplices among the guards and got their hands on a stock of weapons, which were handed out to the conspirators. But at around midnight, Borghese received a telephone call ordering him to stop everything. It then became a race against time to get in touch with all the commandos spread out across Rome before they went over to the attack.

Many questions remain unanswered about this rather baroque episode. Licio Gelli clearly played an important part in the plot, and one wonders if it was not he who cancelled the operation. Another person implicated was the Neapolitan Federico Umberto D'Amato, another of Angleton's friends, who had become the American services' right-hand man, had worked for NATO and now was in the Ministry of the Interior. The news magazine *L'Espresso* even confirmed that Angleton himself had arrived in Italy in the greatest secrecy a short while before the *coup d'état* attempt and left the country shortly afterwards.[7] This does not mean the CIA was the giver of orders, since at the time Angleton no longer was in favour with the Agency's heads. He might have supported the coup privately, though.

In the years that followed, Gelli did all he could to play down the seriousness of the episode and to spare the conspirators any serious consequences, by using his influence within the services and the judicial apparatus. Out of 146 accused at the outset, only 46 were sentenced in the first trial appearance before all were acquitted on appeal.[8] Tommaso Buscetta, the mafioso *pentito*, subsequently testified in 1984 before Judge Falcone that Borghese had contacted the Mafia to support his plan, in

exchange for a general amnesty for imprisoned mafiosi. Without knowing of this testimony, another Mafia boss gave similar evidence in front of a judge in 1986. Gaetano Lunetta, one of the plotters, who had spent a year in prison, declared in an interview with *L'Espresso*[9] that the "political objective of those who organised the coup had been reached: to block Aldo Moro's strategy, separate the ICP from the government parties, and guarantee Italy's total loyalty to NATO and to the Americans. The truth is that the coup really did take place and that it did succeed." But for a limited time only, one is tempted to add.

Indeed, in the 1972 elections, the Christian Democrats took 39% of the votes while the ICP–ISP alliance obtained 37%. It was still a very close-run thing. Nixon was obliged to quit because of the Watergate scandal in 1974. But Gerald Ford, his successor, kept his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, near him and made him Secretary of State. The latter received a visit from the Italian president, Giovanni Leone, together with the minister of foreign affairs, Aldo Moro, who had come to discuss the entry of left-wing parties into the government. According to Moro's wife, the interview was very turbulent, with Kissinger shouting at Moro, ordering him to give up the idea of including all the parties in the government, at the risk of paying "very dearly" for it. Yet, after the 1976 legislative elections, when the ICP reached a historic high point at the polls, Moro, then interim president of the Christian Democrats, decided to carry on regardless.

13

THE IOR CHANGES HORSES

Sindona plays and wins

Once his association with the Vatican was made official, Michele Sindona seemed not to set any limits on his ambitions, both in Italy and in North America. In 1967, he financed the *coup d'état* in Greece for the Colonels—up to $4 million received from the United States. Licio Gelli brought in his expertise and material support. Above all, Sindona financed the Christian Democrats. According to the Pike Congressional Committee report published in 1976, the American government sent $10 million in 1972; most of this was transferred by Sindona's banks. The American ambassador in Italy, Graham Martin, who was close to Nixon, dealt with some of the transfers directly without going through the CIA.

As we saw in the preceding chapter, in the 1970s far-right factions tried to overthrow the government and set up a totalitarian state. To understand Sindona's role in this context, we can mention the testimony made under oath by John McCaffery, a former member of the British secret services and a manager of Hambros Bank, who was associated with Sindona. This testimony was produced by Sindona's defence in February 1981 before the American courts.

> The efforts to fight the left-wing revolution were fragmentary and completely disorganised. Many of those who should have been the natural leaders of the opposition were corrupt,

> inert and inept. Those who were intelligent, strong and successful were a considerable threat to the leftist movement and became targets for elimination. Michele Sindona was a member of this group […]
>
> Sindona contacted me at the beginning of 1972; he was aware of my Resistance past. He had a plan for a *coup d'état*, which was to set up a government in Italy and Sicily that was an ally of the United States. Shortly afterwards, I met Michele Sindona and high-ranking officers when we discussed the *coup d'état* planned by them. At this meeting, I presented a detailed plan for taking over the government and for the first year in power.[1]

However, McCaffery asserted that he had not been made aware of the neo-fascist aspect of the plot: he said that, had he known, he would have refused to take part.

In 1972, Sindona settled in Geneva. Italy was no longer the centre of his preoccupations. His new grand project was to take control of the Franklin National, an American bank then in difficulty. David Kennedy, who was close to Nixon, a former ambassador to NATO and Secretary of the Treasury from 1969 to 1971, provided moral backing. As usual, Sindona used the law firm in which Nixon had been an associate. As usual, he siphoned off funds held in deposit in his banks ($40 million), but that was not enough. He also had to sell his shares in several financial companies. But Licio Gelli wanted it all done within the circle of the P2 lodge, so as not to lose any power in influencing the Italian economy. It was at this moment that another member of P2 intervened, someone who owed a lot to Sindona.

A banker's education

Roberto Calvi was born in Milan on 13 April 1920. Against his family's advice, he enlisted in the Italian Army at 19. In 1941, Mussolini offered to help Hitler conquer the USSR. Calvi was among the troops sent to the Eastern Front. His war conduct earned him decorations from the Italian Army as well as from the Germans. Upon his return, he got a job in a public bank where his father worked. In 1946, a colleague of Calvi senior agreed to recruit his son to his own institution, the Banco Ambrosiano.

This bank's clientele was the Catholic bourgeoisie of northern Italy. It was one of the banks founded at the end of the 19th century with the

Vatican's help to counteract the domination of the lay banks. Its statutes were so composed to avoid it ever falling into irreligious hands. Nobody could, in theory, own more than 5% and any new shareholder had to produce a declaration of good conduct from his parish priest. It was the same for the employees, who had to be good Catholics. Calvi, who spoke German and French, started learning English and began climbing the ladder of the hierarchy. He was bald, medium-sized and slightly overweight. Only his moustache made him a bit distinguished. He dressed in a very conservative fashion, in black suits. His only affectation was to dye his hair when it started going grey. He was not expansive, nor was he emotional. No doubt he was very shy, which made him appear to be rather cold. He was not known to have a social life. In 1950 he met Clara, who became his wife. They had a first child, Carlo, in 1953. Italy was then undergoing an economic boom and the banks were doing good business.

In 1960, Calvi launched the first Italian investment fund which was accessible to the small investor. It was a big success. At the same time, the Ambrosiano bought the Swiss bank Banca del Gottardo. In 1965, Calvi's mentor became the president of the bank and made his protégé a director. He was now at the very threshold of power. It was in 1968 or 1969 that he met Michele Sindona, a meeting which was to change his life.

From this time on, Sindona bought shares in the Ambrosiano Bank, at the same time as the IOR did. Calvi was appointed managing director of the Ambrosiano in 1971. He learned the tricks of offshore banking from Sindona, who had created companies in tax havens like Liechtenstein and Luxembourg. In 1970, Sindona resold one of his Luxembourg institutions to the Ambrosiano, which was renamed Banco Ambrosiano Holding (BAH). Following Sindona's example, Calvi started operating on the Italian market using this institution, which became a shareholder of the Swiss banks in the group, the Banca del Gottardo and Ultrafin. Calvi became managing director of the group in February 1971. His hands were now free. The following month, he created the Nassau Cisalpine Bank, his first offshore institution for South America, in which the IOR took a minority shareholding. Marcinkus was appointed director; it was even whispered that he was a shareholder in a private capacity, without this ever being proved. The Bank of Italy had no right to look at what was going on outside its jurisdiction. Nonetheless, the collaboration between Marcinkus and Calvi started before Sindona's fall, contrary to what has often been written.

By means of a complex (and illegal) arrangement, Calvi took control of the Centrale Finanziaria, a big financial holding company, at the end of 1971. Sindona would have liked to do so, but he was too involved in his various schemes and was suffering his first failures in Italy. As Calvi's empire developed, Sindona's would disintegrate.

Sindona plays and loses

In November 1972, Sindona launched himself into speculation (forward sales) against the Italian lira. He did so with the backing of several banks, in particular the IOR. Sindona was on excellent terms with the United States' ambassador in Italy, Graham Martin. He seemed to have assurances from the American government at a high level. Because of his operations, the lira was weakening and seemed to be taking Italy into bankruptcy. The Bank of Italy called on Sindona for help without knowing that he was one of the main speculators against its currency. Encouraged by the prospect of becoming a national hero, Sindona gave up his strategy, explained that he had succeeded in infiltrating the group of speculators and was going to force them to stop their manoeuvring. No sooner said than done. Giulio Andreotti nicknamed Sindona the "saviour of the lira".

When the Bank of Italy audited the Sindona Group after its demise in 1974, it discovered a fictitious account in which the IOR had placed $22 million so it could take part in the speculative schemes. It was very obviously embarrassing to the Vatican for people to learn that it had participated in an act of economic warfare against Italy. The liquidator of the group refused to return the funds to the IOR.

Franklin National Bank suffered losses because of bets taken out on the dollar price rising. In 1974–5, the bank registered heavy losses, which it concealed by means of false bookkeeping and fictional transactions with other banks in the group.

Still trusting in his lucky star, Sindona launched into a new purchasing project, confident that he had the administration's backing and the influence of his law office. But the Watergate scandal[2] and the threat of Nixon's impeachment reduced his hopes to nothing. New losses of about $25 million were discovered on the exchange markets. The bank was on its knees.

Alerted by market rumours, bankers withdrew their assets from the Franklin Bank, followed closely by well-informed depositors. The Franklin share quotation was suspended. In Italy, the left-wing press was unleashed against Sindona, sowing doubt about the strength of his group. This triggered a wave of withdrawals and a liquidity crisis, which was fatal for him. In June, one of the biggest private German banks went bankrupt, after taking risky positions on the exchange markets. Everybody started to forecast a similar fate for the Sindona Group, which was obliged to borrow $200 million from the Bank of Italy. In return, the banks had to open their account books and accept a team of auditors led by a lawyer, Giorgio Ambrosoli, who quickly discovered a host of irregular transactions, not to mention a string of unaccountable transfers to Christian Democrat politicians. Ambrosoli estimated the unrealised losses at $500 million at the very least. In September, the banking group was liquidated. The following month, it was the turn of Franklin National Bank to be declared bankrupt. Italian justice put out an arrest warrant for Sindona, who had fled.

The news caused a stir and greatly embarrassed the Pope. Mgr Marcel Lefebvre's traditionalist partisans called for the resignation of Paul VI, a "traitor to the Church". On 4 October 1974, in the middle of the night, Licio Gelli telephoned Sindona, who had fled to Switzerland, and advised him to quit the country before Interpol was notified of the warrant for his arrest. His only solution was to reach a country with no extradition agreement. He fled to Taiwan. But after due consideration, he decided to go to the States because he still thought he could restore his reputation.

Having turned himself in to the American authorities, Sindona was left free for the time being. His lawyers declared that he would risk his life if he was extradited to Italy, since the lawsuits in progress against him were the result of a vast left-wing plot to bring down this indefatigable defender of Western values. In the meantime, the Italian magistrates, members of P2, did their best to block or delay the investigations against him. Various Italian figures close to P2 provided unsolicited testimony of the Sicilian's sterling qualities. The most remarkable testimony was presented by Phil Guarino, the American priest who ran the Italian-American division of the Republican Party. To make the communist threat against Sindona even more credible, a member of P2 printed some pamphlets, supposedly coming from the far left and calling for the financier to be killed, which were distributed in the streets of Milan and Rome.

The Italo-American Mafia, in particular Johnny Gambino, welcomed Sindona with open arms. Fundraising was organised to finance his defence. According to the testimony of Nino, Sindona's son, Gambino proposed getting rid of his enemies for his father. In return, Sindona would become his financial *consigliere*.

Gambino was after what was left of Sindona's personal fortune. He persuaded him to invest $150 000 in a project for an Italo-American daily which never saw the light of day, to lend funds for real estate developments which were never finished, and so on. The Italo-American Mafia was Sindona's last chance of salvation, so he let himself be led. On 9 March 1979, Sindona was charged with 99 counts of fraud, perjury and embezzlement of bank funds, and given bail, against security of $3 million.

The Vatican had been associated in one-third of the capital of the Swiss and Italian banks controlled by Sindona. Marcinkus had authorised the Sicilian to speculate on the foreign exchange markets, in which he was to suffer heavy losses. Just his bets on the respective values of the dollar and the lira cost the IOR almost $10 million.

As far as the IOR was concerned, the losses it suffered in the debacle of the Sindona empire were limited. Meanwhile, Marcinkus had stepped up his dealings with Calvi. The IOR was handsomely paid for the funds that it had circulated in Calvi's empire in order to create the illusion of a healthy group. For the single year of 1978, IOR investments in the Calvi Group increased from $200 to $350 million.

14

PAUL VI’S LAST SORROW

The end of Paul VI’s reign was crepuscular. The Pope now lived like a recluse, sombrely, meeting almost nobody. He was tempted to resign. Criticism was rife. For the ultra-conservatives, Paul VI had gone too far in modernising the Church and been too accommodating of the theology of liberation. Certain modern theologians, like the Swiss Hans Küng, questioned the dogma of the pope’s infallibility and lifted the taboos on social questions like abortion or homosexuality.

In May 1969, Paul VI replaced the old Secretary of State, Cardinal Cicognani, with a Frenchman, Mgr Villot. Hailing from the Auvergne, tall with a distant air, Jean-Marie Villot had run the Congregation for the Clergy. He headed the Secretariat under three popes. He was an energetic and calm realist. For a while, he was eclipsed by the hyperactive Mgr Benelli, who was often nicknamed the “staff sergeant”. Benelli was described as being like a modern manager, concerned with efficiency above all else. He looked after all the important business of the Church and even dealt with Paul VI. Benelli supervised the police force (soon to be called the Vigilanza) and the Swiss Guards. In June 1977, Benelli was disgraced, in the Vatican manner: he was appointed a cardinal and sent to Florence. From then on Villot reigned alone, absolutely.

But the final drama of the pontificate was Aldo Moro's assassination; the Pope followed his political Way of the Cross with compassion.

Moro had to die

Born in 1916, Aldo Moro was an intellectual from Catholic Action, having studied law. He was involved in the student trade unions and was appointed president of the Catholic Students Federation in 1939 (he gave up this position in favour of Giulio Andreotti). He then followed a classic university career, involving himself at the same time in the Christian Democrats. He had been campaigning since 1944 and was elected a member of parliament in 1946. As has already been said, Moro and Montini were friends when the latter was the chaplain for the Students Federation.

In 1953, he became president of the Christian Democrat parliamentary group in the chamber. He was several times a minister. In 1959, he was elected secretary general of the party and already then advocated a policy of overture towards the Socialist Party. The Naples congress in 1962 approved this strategy. This overture to the left wing worried part of the Catholic hierarchy, among whom was Cardinal Siri. But John XXIII met Moro in August 1962 and gave him his blessing. The weakened position of the Christian Democrats after the 1963 elections made the alliance inevitable and it became a reality in December. From December 1963 to June 1968, Moro led three centre-right governments, without causing any great revolutions. In 1968, this political tendency lost influence and he started to criticise the clientelism of some of his colleagues.

Moro was minister of foreign affairs from 1969 to 1974, and distanced himself from the United States over several matters. In 1976, he was accused of having taken bribes in the Lockheed scandal;[1] it turned out that the source of the rumour was the American services themselves, who sought to discredit him. In the 1970s, Moro was now agreeable to a "historic compromise" allowing the Communist Party to join in the governmental alliance. Paul VI was hesitant at first (the overture to the Socialists had already embarrassed the Vatican given its management of the papal patrimony), but he ended by agreeing that Moro was right. The Italian Communist Party (ICP) had broken away from Moscow and declared that it was ready to guarantee the permanence of American military bases. In

1974, Moro was once again President of the Council. The increase in the Communist vote in the 1975 elections, and then again in 1976, when the ICP won almost the same number of votes as the Christian Democrats (a good third of the electorate), made it now almost impossible to govern without them.

On 16 March 1978, Aldo Moro was on his way to parliament, where there was going to be a vote of confidence in the new government of national unity, a government that, for the first time since 1947, was to be supported by the ICP. His car and that of his bodyguards slowed down at the Via Fani and the Via Stresa crossroad. It was then that a Fiat 128 swerved into the road in front of Moro's car, which bumped into the rear and remained blocked between it and the bodyguards' car. Moro's driver tried an escape manoeuver but was thwarted by a Mini Minor casually parked at the crossroad. Moro's two cars were finally trapped from behind by another Fiat 128. Two men jumped out from the Fiat and were joined by four others, who'd been waiting at the crossroads, wearing pilots' uniforms.

They drew their guns and fired 91 times at Moro's five bodyguards. Most of the shots were fired by two members of the commando, whom witnesses described as very calm and accurate. The police report concluded that it was a very professional operation executed in a way so as not to wound Moro and to limit the risks taken by the commando. This meticulous execution made one think it was more the work of Army or Mafia types than the Red Brigades.

In the days beforehand, Moro and the head of his security, Oreste Leonardi, had felt that they were being watched. Leonardi had noted the number of a car that was following them and informed the police, who had not followed it up. Moro had asked for an armoured car, but this was refused.

Immediately after the shooting, the police declared the far-left terrorist group, the Red Brigades, responsible. After having carried out mainly kidnappings, they had now in 1976 switched to executions. The Pope heard the news while he was in bed with flu. He was so upset that his doctor had to intervene urgently and administer medication to prevent a heart problem.

An "Andreotti" crisis government was formed with an overwhelming majority in parliament. The authorities took exceptional measures (unrestricted bugging) and resorted to drastic steps: 20 000 policemen and

soldiers were deployed in the Rome region, with 37 000 searches made throughout the whole country, but with no results.

The kidnappers claimed credit for the operation and announced that Moro would be “tried” before a “people’s court”. Moro was held in secret in an apartment on Via Montalcini, bought with money from a ransom paid for the release of a Genovese shipowner. During his entire captivity, Moro was held in a little soundproof, windowless room. Questioned by his self-proclaimed judges, Moro remained unyielding and argued each charge.

Despite very opposing positions, the government fairly quickly adopted a hard line: no negotiation with the kidnappers. President Cossiga explained later that public opinion would not have understood if the authorities tried to negotiate after the bodyguards had been murdered. The ICP’s line was just as firm, and all the more inflexible in that it hated the Brigades. Negotiating with them would be tantamount to recognising their existence. This inflexibility was also the price to be paid for credibility as one of the government parties. The ICP wanted to show that it had absolutely nothing in common with the terrorist far-left wing. Finally, the Christian Democrats wanted to show that they could be courageous in the face of blackmail. Bettino Craxi’s Socialist Party, standing alone, was out of step with this position, as were some of Moro’s friends within the Christian Democrats. The far left was ill at ease given Moro’s popularity (the trade union offices called for demonstrations against his kidnapping) and took refuge in a subtle “neither-nor” position (neither with the state nor with the Red Brigades).

Moro was allowed to write letters to his family and to President Cossiga in an attempt to soften this hard line, which surprised the Red Brigades (many other previous cases of kidnapping had ended in a deal). In his first letter, Moro mentioned the risks this might involve: “The situation in which I find myself is such that, having all the knowledge and the awareness of long experience, there is a risk of being called on to speak in a way that could turn out to be objectionable or dangerous in certain specific cases.” Andreotti stated that this letter was not a document “morally attributable to Moro”, which was a way of saying that either he wasn’t in his right mind or he was writing under duress.[2]

In a later letter, Moro was much less diplomatic and accused his friends of abandoning him. Moro’s family, helpless as they were, tried to influence

public opinion, but in vain. On 7 April, Moro wrote to the Pope, but the letter never reached him. On 15 April, the Red Brigades announced that Moro had been sentenced to death. A few days later they proposed a pardon for Moro in return for freeing thirteen Communist prisoners. On the 19th the Italian Bishops' Conference asked for negotiations to be opened, and on the 22nd the Caritas organisation, which comprised a number of Catholic charitable bodies, offered to mediate. Also on 22 April, the Pope published a public appeal to the Red Brigades: "I beg you on my knees. Free the *onorevole* [honourable] Aldo Moro, without any conditions, not because of my humble and loving intercession, but by virtue of the common fraternal dignity of humanity." It was a first step in recognising the Red Brigades, but it closed the doors on all other negotiations. The Pope asked the entire Curia to do everything and anything to find a simple way to save his friend.

The Red Brigades thought they were better representatives of the working classes than the Communist Party, which, in their eyes, was compromised. Their aim was to prevent the return of a fascist regime in Italy. They carried out armed propaganda operations (such as kidnappings) from 1970 to 1976, then assassinations from 1976 onwards. Moro's kidnapping took place after the trial of legendary figures of the Red Brigades had begun in Turin. The apparent aim was to secure their freedom.

Who killed Moro?

Sensing the end was near and no doubt feeling bitter, Moro wrote a letter in which he announced he was resigning symbolically from the Christian Democrats. On 5 May, a communiqué from the Red Brigades announced that Moro had been executed. In his last letter to his wife, Aldo Moro concluded: "The Pope has done precious little; perhaps he'll have a conscience." Contrary to the wishes of the deceased, a Mass was celebrated by Paul VI in the presence of senior leaders of the Italian Republic and the Christian Democrats. The family refused to take part. The Pope appeared visibly distressed.

It has to be said that the report presented to the Pope showing the mistakes made during the Moro affair was both worrying and damning. First of all, it confirmed that when his captivity began, Moro had indeed written a letter to the Pope, which he had never received. It had been blocked by Andreotti. Above all, the Pope's assistants in the Curia, who had

been able to question their sources in the police and among journalists, concluded that the Italian police services had been particularly sloppy. For example: on 28 March, an anonymous call supplied the names of the supposed members of the commando. It took a month before some of them were put under surveillance. The first search took place on 9 May, the day Moro died, and files of targets of future Red Brigade operations were discovered. Another extraordinary episode: on 18 March, the police searched several flats on the Via Cassia, including one where (it was later learnt) several members of the Red Brigades lived. As the flat was empty, the police didn't investigate further. On the same day, the police searched apartments supposed to be occupied by the Red Brigades at 96 Via Gradoli. On the third floor, nobody answered the doorbell. The police assumed the flat was empty, whereas a neighbour said she'd been disturbed at night by a radio picking up police messages. As Judge Imposimato later remarked, "There was enough there to arouse the curiosity of the most narrow-minded of policemen."[3] If the apartment where the neighbours heard "strangers going up and down" had been put under surveillance, the Red Brigades members could have been tailed.

A Senate inquiry revealed that the block of flats housed not only Brigade members, but also policemen and members of the secret services, and that it was run by a company with links to these services. Were the members of the Brigade under surveillance? And if this was this case, why were they not followed to the hideout where Moro was hidden in the Via Montalcini? After retiring, Judge Imposimato recounted what a brigadier of the military police force, Giovanni Ladu, had confided in him in 2008. The block of flats had been put under surveillance by the police, employing a camera. In 2012, a former Army officer told the judge that he himself had installed the camera. "The whole operation was run by Giuseppe Santovito, the head of the military secret services, and Pietro Musumeci, the deputy director of the secret services. Each of them was acting on behalf of the Ministry of the Interior."[4] According to the same officer, an operation to free Moro was planned for 8 May but was cancelled at the start of the day.

Several former mafiosi testified in the 1990s that members of the Mafia had offered themselves as intermediaries to negotiate with the Red Brigades. But very clear instructions came from the top not to act. Tommaso Buscetta says he suggested negotiating with the imprisoned

Brigade members in Turin. He received a counter-order: “Later I learned that the leaders of the Christian Democrats close to Andreotti had persuaded the Cosa Nostra to let Moro be executed, to give him the halo of a martyr, in the name of anti-communism.”[5] During the trial in Palermo, which put into question Andreotti’s links with the Mafia, this affair was brought up again, though it was impossible to prove with any certainty that the politician had intervened in this matter.

The refusal to negotiate Moro’s freedom was very unusual. Three years later, a simple Christian Democrat councillor from Campania, Ciro Cirillo, was kidnapped by the Red Brigades. He managed reconstruction work in the south after an earthquake and had a reputation for being corrupt. This time, Don Raffaele Cutolo, a Camorra godfather imprisoned at Ascoli Piceno, was asked to mediate by the Italian secret services. He negotiated with the Red Brigades to free Cirillo for a ransom of one and a half billion lire (with a premium of two billion for the Camorra in recognition for its services).

One thing is certain as far as Moro is concerned: the Italian secret services were not up to the task. It is true that they were right in the middle of restructuring. The Carabinieri, in whom the anti-terrorist struggle was centralised until 1977, had just been withdrawn in favour of the regional police forces. In January 1978, a decree disbanded the Servizio Informazione Difesa (SID, or Defence Information Service), considered opaque and poorly managed, and replaced it with two distinct entities: the SISMI (military intelligence) and the SISDE, responsible to the President of the Council. On the other hand, the Ministry of the Interior acquired a central office for general investigations and special operations (the UCIGOS).

Some authors have asserted, without presenting any definitive proof, that Moro was the victim of a plot instigated by an out-of-control faction of the Italian secret services, acting with the CIA to manipulate the Red Brigades. It is true that the historic compromise that Moro represented was not well regarded by the Americans, to whom the idea of communists joining the government was anathema. According to this theory, kidnapping was riskier for these services than a cold murder. The Red Brigades might have had their own reasons, however, for capturing Moro rather than murdering him.

Also incriminated was Licio Gelli's P2 Lodge. The documentary by Michael Busse and Maria-Rosa Bobbi, entitled *Aldo Moro: Anatomy of a Crime*,[6] revealed that at a meeting held at the very time Moro was kidnapped, Licio Gelli apparently said "the most difficult part has been done" when the news was announced.

When the police were searching for the Red Brigades hideout, they found a list of names which turned out to be similar to a list seized at Licio Gelli's home in 1981. Above all, the main people heading the committee inquiring into the Moro affair turned out to be members of the P2 lodge, in particular the heads of the SISMI, the SISDE and the UCIGOS. There is no doubt whatsoever that this very anti-communist lodge had wanted to thwart Moro's plans. It was also clear that it had the means of slowing down the investigations and of strengthening the Italian authorities' intransigent attitude.

It is now known that the Red Brigades had contacts with the Czech secret services, who supplied them with a base for training and weapons. Thanks to the Mitrokhin archives, it is also known that the KGB had infiltrated a fake student into Moro's circle: Feodor Sokolov studied at the University of Rome and came regularly to ask Moro questions after the lectures. Sokolov left Rome for Moscow the day after the kidnapping.

We know today that the CIA was contacted at the very beginning of the crisis by the Ministry of the Interior and that the American authorities dispatched Steve Pieczenik, no. 2 in the State Department's anti-terrorist unit, who was an expert in kidnapping but not very well up in Italian affairs. According to secret evidence, Pieczenik did not hide the fact that his priority was Italy's stability and the anti-Communist struggle, not saving Moro. "For me, the key element was to know when I had to stop pretending to negotiate. This moment arrived at the end of the fourth week of his detention, when the letters of Aldo Moro started becoming desperate. When he let it be understood that he was on the point of revealing state secrets and giving the Brigades the identities of the holders of those secrets. I then turned to Cossiga, telling him that it was all becoming very worrying. We'd reached the turning point and we had to decide if Aldo Moro could live or if he had to die."[7] *Raison d'état* took precedence over all else. Did Cossiga and Andreotti sacrifice Moro? Were they informed that there was the possibility of an intervention to free him? All these questions suggest that

Moro's death could have been a continuation of the so-called strategy of tension, just in another way.

Judge Imposimato went even further and asserted that if Moro had been freed, everything would have been done to remove him from political life. The judge had discovered the existence of the "Victor plan", which envisaged "having him interned in a psychiatric clinic" under the pretext that he had "lost his mind during his confinement". While captive, he had drawn up a memoir in which he denounced the corruption among the Christian Democrats, its compromised relations with the Cosa Nostra, the P2 lodge and Sindona. In 1983, Judge Imposimato left the magistracy after the murder of his brother. He then became a senator, with a Communist affiliation.

One last point raises several questions. On 9 October 1990, a worker was renovating an apartment used by the Red Brigades during Moro's kidnapping and discovered a secret hiding place, full of weapons and documents as well as 60 million lire. Most interesting was the photocopy of a 416-page manuscript composed by Moro during his detention. The original was seized by the Carabinieri and disappeared into the hands of their head, General Dalla Chiesa. It is astounding that this hiding place had been missed. But what is even more incredible is that the Red Brigades commando didn't think of publishing Moro's writings, which were so explosive at the time. They gave details of the Christian Democrats' financing by the CIA. Moro also stressed Andreotti's relations with the CIA on one hand and the Italian secret services, for which he was responsible, on the other. Moro even alluded to the Gladio network. In brief, before dying, Moro left his kidnappers with more than enough to embarrass the powers that be. And they didn't do anything. This is what is really surprising.

Paul VI was inconsolable after the death of his friend Aldo Moro. He insisted on officiating at the funeral Mass himself. A few weeks later, on 5 August 1978, he himself died. Once again, the conclave of cardinals met. The Camerlengo, Cardinal Villot, was intent on avoiding any possibility of espionage during the conclave. He asked the director of the Vigilanza, Camillo Cibin, to ensure that there would be no microphones. He didn't find any, but he learned that the Radio Vatican team, desirous of an international scoop, had engineered an audacious plan: a small transmitter in the shape of a shirt button would be sewn into the clothes of a conclave

assistant; voices could not be transmitted directly, but it could send signals, like Morse code. The assistant had to tap three times when the pope was chosen. Needless to say, the authors of this ingenious scheme were reprimanded at once by the Secretariat. If they were chasing after the Russians and the Americans for microphones, they certainly weren’t going to leave the door open for any Vatican journalist spooks.

IV

WOJTYŁA

15

THE POPE WHO SHOULDN’T HAVE DIED

On 28 September 1976, the Catholic world was in a state of shock: Albino Luciani, the “smiling pope”, elected 33 days earlier, had just been found dead in his bed. Officially he suffered a coronary thrombosis. If one looks more closely at the official account, his death is riddled with confusion and surprises which left the door wide open for a whole series of fanciful theories.

On that day at 05h30, Sister Vincenza (who had been in service with Albino Luciani since 1959) found him unconscious in his bed, with his glasses on his nose. Panic-stricken, she gave the alarm. The Secretary of State, Cardinal Villot, came to his bedroom and certified he was dead. At that precise moment Villot became the Camerlengo, invested for the interim with the supreme powers of the Vatican—as he had been already when Paul VI died. Villot immediately pocketed the deceased Pope’s notes, his medicine, his glasses and the will stored away in his study. Then he withdrew to make various telephone calls. A doctor carried out a brief medical examination and concluded at once that it was a heart attack, which had taken place, according to him, at around 23h00 the previous evening. At 07h27, an official bulletin announced the Pope’s demise. It was said later that he had died reading an old book, which was neither in his room nor in his apartments.

The first puzzling incident took place at 05h00, according to the journalist David Yallop.[1] A Vatican car turned up in front of the home of two embalmers, the Signoracci brothers, who had been forewarned by telephone a few minutes earlier, to take them to the deceased Pope's bedside. A car ordered before Cardinal Villot had certified the death? Informed of the event, several cardinals present in Rome opposed the hastiness of the instruction for embalming, which would make any later autopsy impossible. In Italy, the legal period before embalming can take place is a minimum of 24 hours after death. Villot explained that the Pope had taken an excessive dose of his medicine by mistake, which would most likely feed theories of poisoning. So, according to him, the Church had to avoid a scandal and organise the next conclave, which was summoned in record time, as quickly as possible. For their part, the Signoracci brothers, according to Yallop, noted that there was no rigor mortis, which put the Pope's death that same morning, between 4 and 5 a.m., and not at about 11 p.m. the previous evening. The Pope's personal doctor, Dr Da Ros, who had examined him three times in September, ruled out any possibility that he had made a mistake when taking his medicine and insisted that his patient, aged 65, was in fairly good health. With such encouragement, doubts and rumours could easily develop.

The man who shouldn't have been pope

Albino Luciani was not a pope like the others. He was born in 1912 into a modest family in north-western Italy. His father, a worker, espoused socialist ideas, whereas his mother was a fervent Catholic who encouraged her son's vocation. Albino, a brilliant pupil at the seminary, obtained a doctorate in theology. Ordained in 1935, he began to teach theology two years later, becoming vicar-general of his parish in 1948, and was one of the first bishops appointed by John XXIII. His ministry was directed at guiding souls rather than theology. He was known to say that there were too many theologians and not enough pastors. With great rectitude and great simplicity in his manner, he championed the idea of a Church of the poor, in the service of the poor. When two priests in his diocese were involved in the misappropriation of funds, he refused to protect them and reimbursed the victims by selling some of the Church's property. In 1969, he became the Patriarch of Venice, and then in 1973 he was made a cardinal by Paul VI.

The Pope particularly appreciated this patriarch who preferred visiting hospitals than entertaining Venetian high society.

When the conclave started looking for a successor to Paul VI, Cardinal Luciani didn't appear on any lists of candidates; he didn't campaign for any of the sides present, either for the conservatives or for the liberals. After the fourth round of the election, he was an obvious candidate without being one, a compromise choice. His modest and courteous manner seemed to make him a "transition pope" who would simply look after current business without changing anything in the Church's main orientations.

The new pope took John Paul I as his name and started by refusing to submit to any coronation ceremonial; he got down to working on the files, a little lost when faced with the big machine that was the Curia, which he didn't know at all. His appointment did worry one person in particular, Paul Marcinkus, the IOR head. He'd been rather casual with his new superior in the past. In 1971, Marcinkus, Sindona and Calvi had agreed that the Ambrosiano Bank would buy the Banca Cattolica del Veneto from the Vatican. The bank in question would at once abandon its religious purposes and dispose of its diocesan accounts. This aroused the great displeasure of the Patriarch of Venice, one Albino Luciani, who was turned away curtly by Marcinkus, to whom he had gone to complain. In 1978, while Calvi watched his Banco Ambrosiano being searched by the Italian courts, the Pope had every reason to get rid of the head of the IOR. His death suited quite a few people.

The journalist David Yallop, whose inquiry, *In the Name of God*, was a huge success worldwide, created a sensation when he declared that Pope John Paul I had been killed by a number of convergent interests which he had decided to shake up. Apart from Marcinkus, he pointed a finger at Villot (whom Luciani intended to replace), Gelli, Sindona, Calvi, and one or two other corrupt clerics like Cardinal Cody in Chicago. Yallop conceded that there was no irrefutable proof and that he did not know what role each of them had played, but after one reads his book, the official theory of a natural death is difficult to believe. Too many facts and lies point in the opposite direction.

Apart from the embalmers who arrived much too early, the lies and the confused circumstances, the time at which the body was discovered, the hurried embalming, and the Pope's apparent determination to put an end to corruption in the Vatican, Yallop also brought up the testimonies of people

like the Swiss Guard sergeant Hans Roggen, who saw Marcinkus within the Vatican on the morning of the Pope's death at 06h45, well before the time he usually arrived. In those days, he lived 20 minutes away by car. On a first reading, the book seems convincing. And it convinced millions of readers throughout the world when it came out.

In fact it was so convincing that the Vatican, under John Paul II, initiated a counter-inquiry by an independent American journalist, promising him free access to the witnesses. The choice was John Cornwell, who in 1989 published *A Thief in the Night: The Mysterious Death of Pope John Paul I*.[2] In quite an extraordinary way, this commission revealed how great was the distress of the faithful, as well as of the clergy, many of whom had read Yallop and been very concerned. Given the results, certain people in authority in the Curia must have thought that the remedy was worse than the disease. For although Cornwell concluded, rightly, that there hadn't been a plot, the image he gave of the Vatican was unsparing.

A pope not properly cared for

Cornwell at first described a man who was very much alone at the head of the Vatican. Luciani had not anticipated he would become pope. He arrived without any assistants. And, all of a sudden, he had been faced with the files outstanding at the end of the reign of Paul VI. Diego Lorenzi, the Pope's secretary, testified: "I do think that Cardinal Villot got his claws into him without waiting, presenting him with a number of substantial Church problems. The previous pope hadn't been able to face them because of his great age … Villot thought he was faced with a fairly young man. Luciani, who had taken part in several synods, was aware of a good number of the problems the Church faced in the world. He always said that he had no direct experience of these problems."[3] This avalanche of dossiers implied there was a lot of pressure, requiring a huge capacity for work, quite different from what was expected of a Patriarch of Venice.

The question must be asked whether Luciani was truly "in good health", as Yallop asserts. Cornwell questioned Lina Petri, the Pope's niece, who was a doctor. That was not at all the story she told: "In 1975, he had an accident. I was already in Rome at the Policlinico Gemelli. He'd gone to Brazil to meet Italian immigrants originally from Venetia. When he

returned, he had an eye problem involving a loss of vision. He went to the hospital, in Mestre, to consult Professor Rama, whose diagnosis was that he had an embolism or an arterial thrombosis on the retina. This was something serious. It meant that the blood was not flowing properly. There were substances in the veins which were coagulating and making blood clots which blocked the arteries.

"When something like that happens, it means there are serious circulatory and coagulation problems. It means that what happened in the eye could also happen in the femoral artery, in the intestines or in the pulmonary artery. When there is a precedent, it's serious. Care must be taken, because from that moment on, one can no longer be considered as being in good health."[4] From that moment, Luciani was a slave to anti-coagulation medicine for the rest of his life. After he was elected pope, his habits changed drastically. His whole way of life was completely turned upside down.

Everybody noticed that his legs were swollen and that he couldn't wear any shoes, either new or old. This was a sign of venous stasis, where the blood has trouble circulating in the veins. The Pope had to do walking exercises every day. But all this didn't alarm anybody. "It seems that my uncle never had a doctor at the Vatican," Lina Petri added. "He would have needed, however, to be monitored medically. In Venice of course he had a doctor, but not in Rome. He was in fact a pope without a doctor."[5] A doctor was of course attached to the Vatican—Dr Buzzonetti—but, incredible as it may seem, he never met Luciani's Venetian doctor and had no knowledge of his medical file.

Cornwell also tried to verify the most important evidence collected by Yallop. Some like Roggen, the member of the Swiss Guards, retracted, but one imagines that pressure was put on them. More embarrassing was the timing of the Signoracci brothers, the embalmers. It appears that the body of the Pope was embalmed in the evening. Cornwell found evidence of a car which came to pick them up at their home: at 17h15, just after five o'clock in the afternoon, and not five in the morning. The body of the Pope was to be put on display for four whole days in public and the weather could be warm and humid. Embalming was therefore necessary to avoid the smells of decomposition and other gases.

The timeline which Cornwell was able to reconstruct went as follows: Sister Vincenza realised that the Pope was dead at about 05h30 or 05h35. Villot was the first to arrive. Dr Buzzonetti arrived in the bedroom at around 06h00. They drew up a first communiqué and decided that the nun was not to be mentioned. This was the first of a series of lies, which in their opinion were not important, but were told in the interests of propriety. The Pope was described as having died peacefully reading an edifying book, a book which wasn't even in the bedroom. These were perhaps white lies in the Curia's mental universe, but they opened the door to all sorts of conjectures.

They forgot to mention that on the previous evening, while walking, the Pope started coughing raucously, with a chest pain. Sister Vincenza, clearly quite used to this, at once turned up with medicine. When he was informed of this incident, a cardiovascular specialist, Dr Francis Roe, confirmed the hypothesis formulated by the niece. "This is what might have happened: the exercise displaced a piece of thrombus, which moved up into the lungs, which caused that sudden pain—that is very characteristic—but which was not enough to cause death.

"It isn't rare for small pulmonary embolisms to cause pain, which is nonetheless less severe than in the case of a heart attack. The detail that you mention [the pain in the chest] goes a long way to explaining a massive pulmonary embolism in the evening."[6]

If that is the explanation, then it is both reassuring, in that there was no internal plot, and damning, in that it shows there was a certain irresponsible attitude within the Curia at the time. Several people close to the Pope were absent on the evening of his death. His secretary, Diego Lorenzi, returned late that night and went to bed directly. All the witnesses were more concerned with saving face than with telling the truth. To this must be added the internal rumours. An anonymous witness gave Cornwell this diagnosis: "The problems began when the people who had argued with the Pope the previous evening were then obliged to handle the information. And the lies, half-truths, rumours and obscure stories began to circulate, all that as a result of shock and panic. They had elected the Pope, this poor man, and he found himself all alone. He could not stand this burden. He did try, but he didn't have the necessary psychological makeup."

And at the end of his investigation the author concluded: “John Paul almost certainly died of a pulmonary embolus due to a condition of abnormal coagulability of the blood. He required rest and monitored medication. If these had been prescribed, he would almost certainly have survived. The warnings of a mortal illness were clear for all to see; the signs were ignored. Little or nothing was done to succor or to save him.”

16

WOJTYŁA, THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS POPE

The son of a retired Polish officer, Karol Wojtyła was the pure embodiment of Polish history. In his childhood he absorbed Polish patriotic and religious traditions. He lived through several family crises: his younger sister died in childhood, his mother died when he was 8 years old, his older brother when he was 11, and, finally, his father disappeared when he was 20. These tragedies shaped his character. The death of his father certainly determined his decision to become a priest.

During World War II, Wojtyła and a group of young students were employed in the Solvay chemical factory, which was considered essential to the war effort; it gave them the right to a pass that allowed them to move around freely. At the same time, the young man took part in a clandestine seminary, set up in 1942. The lessons were individual. The students didn't know each other. If they were discovered, they risked being deported. A huge raid took place in Cracow on 6 August 1944. So Archbishop Stefan Sapieha decided to house seven seminarians in his residence. They had to wear a cassock even though they were not ordained yet. They could then study full-time.

Wojtyła was ordained by Cardinal Sapieha in 1946. The latter decided to send him to Rome to study. The young priest spent eighteen months there (with the Dominicans), a crucial period in his career. He visited the French

philosopher Jacques Maritain, who was then ambassador to the Vatican and a friend of Montini. When he returned to Poland in 1948, the Polish Church had a new primate: Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński. As the population was 95% Catholic, Poland could not be treated like other countries in the Eastern bloc. The Church became de facto the only voice opposing the communist regime. Although a number of his colleagues in the Eastern bloc countries were persecuted or ended up in prison, Wyszyński tried to reach an agreement with the Polish authorities: the result was accords signed in 1950, the first of this kind. These accords served as a guide for Wojtyła when he confronted communist leaders as a cardinal and then as pope.

In the following three decades the number of conflicts increased between the Church and the Polish state, which regularly violated its undertakings. The dialogue was, however, never broken off, even when Wyszyński was imprisoned in 1953. Wojtyła learned much from this experience.

Upon his return to Rome, Sapieha appointed him vicar of Niegowić, a country parish to the east of Cracow. There for the first time, he saw Stalinism at work when the secret police arrested one of the members of the local association of young Catholics.

Seven months later he was transferred to a church in Cracow. The cardinal closely followed the path his protégé was taking and, shortly before passing away, recommended him to his successor, Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak. At the end of 1951, the latter ordered Wojtyła to take two years' leave to study for a doctorate. Meanwhile, Wojtyła carried on with the theatrical activities he'd started when still a student, as actor, director and even author of plays.

Clandestine activities

In 1953, after Cardinal Wyszyński was arrested, Wojtyła joined a clandestine group of teachers who met secretly to discuss ways of undermining communism from within. He thought it was necessary to avoid any open conflict with the regime while advancing the principles of a Christian life. One not very well-known episode was the underground publication of a manuscript by Wojtyła, *The Catholic Social Ethic*, in the 1950s, which his biographer Jonathan Kwitny has revealed.[1] At the time,

Wojtyła was a professor at the Jagellonian University. An office employee, Romuald Kukołowicz, had acquired experience of clandestine printing during the war. Under the communists, printers were closely watched. When asked by Wojtyła's students, Kukołowicz got hold of a printing press dating back to the German occupation. With the help of several students, the manuscript was typeset. Two hundred and fifty reams of paper were stolen by accomplices at their workplaces. The printing had to be done by hand, page by page. At an interval of twelve months, two volumes were published, of 250 copies each.

Shortly before he died, in 1958 Pius XII appointed six new bishops, among them Wojtyła, without doubt at the suggestion of Baziak. Without knowing it, the Pope had just inaugurated the career of his future successor, who would carry out the mission he himself had been unable to accomplish in full.

The SB, the Polish secret police, at the time had a thousand or so agents within the Polish Church. In particular, it had an informer close to Archbishop Baziak. This was Father Władysław Kulczycki, a lawyer trained in France and a former member of the Resistance imprisoned by the Nazis. The SB had discovered that he had a secret affair and blackmailed him. In Wyszyński's entourage, the SB had other informers who reported on his annoyance with the rising star. "Wojtyła mustn't forget that he is nothing but a temporary administrator and that he mustn't boss everybody about."[2]

Archbishop Baziak died in 1962. The archdiocese's chapter appointed Wojtyła as vicar, which put him at least for the interim at the head of the Church in Cracow, pending the appointment of a new archbishop. That same year, he went with the Polish delegation to the Second Vatican Council in Rome. There he met an old seminary friend from Cracow, Father Andrzej Deskur, who was in a strategic position, that of being responsible for the Council's press, and who became his chaperon. He introduced him to a lot of important people.

For Wojtyła, used to the culture of secrecy and solidarity of the Polish bishops, who were held in Wyszyński's iron grip, Vatican II was a revolution. In Saint Peter's Basilica, arguments broke out in complete freedom between opposing factions, rumours circulated, there was clapping, murmurs, gibes. In short, Wojtyła discovered both parliamentary democracy and the Curia's intriguing. For he who was used to uniting in silence against

the criticism of the Church made by the communist regime's representatives, it was a shock to hear the virulent criticism of the Church hierarchy. In essence, Wojtyła wasn't opposed to the revolutionary movement of Vatican II. According to the votes he cast, he sided with those who wanted to reform the Church, to open it up and to allow it to preach the Gospel in the modern world. He appeared both as a conservative on some social matters and as a progressive on questions like social justice. He was in step with the modernist movement in the Council.

At the death of John XXIII, Paul VI took up the legacy of Vatican II and carried on its work. He became Wojtyła's new mentor, a living example of how a pope can move among the different factions of the Church in order to impose his own way gently. During his stays in Rome, Wojtyła started building up his international network. He very quickly established himself as the best-known Polish bishop after Wyszyński.

In 1963, the Primate of Poland had to fill the post of Archbishop of Warsaw. In terms of the agreement made with the regime, the authorities had to approve his choice. Wyszyński presented six candidates one after the other, who were all turned down. All sources agree that he had no intention of appointing Wojtyła. Wyszyński thought that his rise had been too quick. The Polish authorities deduced that if Wyszyński pushed Wojtyła aside, this was because he thought Wojtyła too receptive to communism and that he risked privileging dialogue with the regime. When he ran out of candidates, Wyszyński ended up putting forward Wojtyła's name, which was immediately accepted. This showed how much the regime deluded itself about the way the Church worked in general and about Wojtyła's character in particular. It was an irony of fate that without this appointment, Wojtyła would never have become pope, or not as quickly, with the results that we now know.

In 1966, Wojtyła introduced into his entourage the person who was to be his closest and most faithful servant to the end: Father Stanisław Dziwisz who had been ordained in 1963, served as a vicar in a mountain village before working in the Cracow seminary. Wojtyła spotted him at that time and made him his personal chaplain, despite his youth. With his naturally calm nature, and the gifts of a formidable memory and a good sense of humour, Dziwisz became the personal secretary and right-hand man of Pope John Paul II. His other trump card was that he was an excellent skier, which enabled him to go with the athletic Wojtyła out on the ski pistes.

In 1967, Wojtyła was appointed cardinal by Paul VI. In Poland, this was a surprise. Wyszyński didn't have anything to do with it. It became clear that Paul VI was following the Polish cleric's career. That same year, Wojtyła was involved in secret negotiations between a papal delegation led by Casaroli, which included his friend Deskur, and officials from the regime, on the possibility of setting up diplomatic relations.

Between 1973 and 1975, Wojtyła was interviewed by the Pope eleven times in private audiences. In 1976, he was asked to direct a spiritual retreat for the Curia, a sign of great trust from the Pope.

At the time, the regime didn't seem to take the measure of Wojtyła seriously and even thought it could encourage antagonism between him and Wyszyński. According to a Polish secret police (UB) document, dated 5 August 1967, called "Our Tactics toward Cardinals Wojtyła and Wyszyński":

> Cardinal Wyszynski was brought up in a traditional family of Church servants. In the opinion of the clergy, this is an inferior type of people, and this stigma weighs on him to this today … On many occasions, "getting even with the clergy" was for him the Freudian "principle of compensation". His extreme clericalism and [cult of] Marianism was born in the climate of his family home … He built his "scientific career" on anti-communist activity and anti-communist writings, which, in 1948, were decisive in his advancement […]
>
> On the one hand, the Vatican needed a banner for an anti-communist crusade in Poland, and on the other hand reactionary forces in the country and in exile needed to create a legal opposition, and there was no candidate with greater experience …
>
> The stigma on his personality was also maintained by his continued presence and activity in provincial towns like Włocławek or Lublin … During the "Cold War", his position becomes greater—he is the standard-bearer of the anti-communist front … In the final period of the Pius XII pontificate, he was the "expert" on questions of establishing relations between the Church and socialist countries. Poland at the time was the "testing ground" for such matters … John XXIII's pontificate and Vatican Council II resulted in the diminution of his position, which was then maintained artificially. But it all led inevitably to the drop in his prestige …
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> He represents the view that it is useful to make "arrangements" with the authorities on specific questions, but he conducts feuds and organizes clashes because it augments interest in the Church and

> draws people to the defence of its "endangered interests" … His concept of shallow, emotional and devotional Catholicism is correct and profitable from the viewpoint of the Church's immediate interests [for some years] … His treatment of the intellectual elite, Catholic intelligentsia and laity as "uncertain elements" has its roots in Polish realities. The correctness of his reasoning is justified by facts: shallow, traditional and devotional religiosity is the religiosity of the Catholic masses. Thoughtful religiosity, on the other hand, is peculiar to a thin layer of the intellectual elite. The strength of the Church in Poland had resided for centuries not among the elites, but in the Catholic masses.[3]

To put it more simply, the Polish secret police considered Wyszyński to be slightly narrow-minded, like the majority of the Polish Catholic population. Wojtyła was entitled to more respect:

> The tenth successive Cracow cardinal comes from a family of the intelligentsia—from a religious but not devotional environment. He studied at the Jagellonian University and had contacts with leftist youth. During World War II, he was a worker in a Cracow chemical plant, which possessed considerable traditions of workers' movements … He rose in the Church hierarchy not thanks to an anti-communist stance, but thanks to intellectual values (his works on Catholic morality and ethics, such as *Love and Responsibility*, have been translated into many languages) …
>
> It can be safely said that he is one of the few intellectuals in the Polish episcopate. He deftly reconciles—unlike Wyszyński—traditional popular religiosity with intellectual Catholicism, knowing how to appreciate both of them … He has not so far engaged in open anti-state political activity. It seems that politics is his weaker suit; he is over-intellectualized. He lacks organizing and leadership qualities; and this is his weakness in the rivalry with Wyszyński.
>
> The model of Catholicism and coexistence with socialist countries proposed by Wojtyła … corresponds to the future line of the Vatican.
>
> His model[4] of Catholicism is "open Catholicism" towards the problems of contemporary Poland. He has support in intellectual and reformist circles in the Vatican and the French, German, Dutch and Italian episcopates …

> The cardinal's secular life-style brings him closer to the circles of the young intelligentsia and students (for example, participation in camping, kayaking, tourist excursions) … He is under an overwhelming influence of forces and pressure groups completely different from Cardinal Wyszyński. Independent of his wishes, these forces will draw him into conflict with the Primate.

Wojtyła's portrait in this assessment was more accurate than Wyszyński's caricature. The author's analysis of the source of his popularity was fairly good, but he was greatly mistaken about his political ideas, confusing his caution with political neutrality, which was far from the truth.

The tactics to be followed by the Polish services were clear: "Both cardinals will guard the interests of the Church, although their differences in perceiving these interests will deepen. To expect a break-up in the unity of the Episcopate is utopian … Wojtyła will not go for open struggle with Wyszyński and he will not let himself be pushed into it. In an eventual struggle, he can count only on forces within the Church. We must risk the approach that the less he is pushed by us, the sooner a conflict will develop. Sooner or later, these two trends must clash on many fronts."[5]

The authorities mustn't therefore give the impression of taking sides but do everything possible to discreetly reinforce Wojtyła's reputation, without him realising, because he didn't want to enter into conflict with the Primate. "We must observe and study every manifestation in the relations between the two cardinals, and conduct an elastic policy, according to changing circumstances … We must use diplomatic channels to determine whom the Vatican is the most likely to support and see whether Wojtyła has in the future real chances of becoming the head of the Polish Episcopate. We must not hit the archdiocese too hard—although we must occasionally apply 'administrative measures'—in order to remove suspicions toward Wojtyła on the part of groups at home and abroad [who are] not sympathetic toward him."

* * *

In 1968, the Prague Spring offered hope of new religious freedom: priests were freed, restrictions lifted, and so on. We now know that the movement was repressed severely. For years, Wojtyła had secretly trained and ordained

Czech priests, whose seminaries were closed in their country. Candidates for the priesthood crossed the border clandestinely to take part in seminary sessions. For their part, Poles crossed the border from time to time “on a trip” to give support to their comrades in their studies. Other teams did the same with the Baltic States and Russia. Wojtyła was described as one of the most active people in this sphere. Apparently, this Polish network benefited from deliveries of Bibles and religious material organised by Western secret services and organisations like Pro Patribus. This aspect of Wojtyła’s activities does not seem to have been discovered by the Polish services. Their subsequent attitudes confirmed this. Such experience of clandestine activities was obviously of great use to the future pope. It also explains why the circle of his trusted advisors was made up not only of Poles but also of a lot of Czechs.

The collaboration between Wojtyła and Paul VI grew increasingly during this period, as did the friendship between them. Wojtyła thought that the Communist Party was getting weaker and could not maintain its hold on Polish society much longer. He became more proactive, demanding to be able to establish new seminaries and open churches. He opposed a government policy aimed at forbidding catechism in schools. He protested against the restrictions on printing paper for the Catholic press. He started working with Odrodzenie (Renaissance), the clandestine Catholic group backed by Wyszyński, which discreetly trained the future elite of the Polish Church. In short, he became more and more political.

In June 1976, fresh riots broke out after a further increase in food prices. Wyszyński and Wojtyła supported the workers’ demands, at the same time calling for a return to work and asking the government not to punish the strikers. The KOR, the Workers’ Defence Committee, was formed in the same year, made up of dissident intellectuals who had become closer to the Church. After this series of events, Wyszyński was sufficiently reassured about Wojtyła’s solidity and reliability to consider him as his successor, but not necessarily anything else.

* * *

The year 1978 was an exceptional one for the Church, with two conclaves being held. The second, following the death of Luciani, took place in a very different atmosphere from the first. The cardinals were still shocked by his

death. No Italian candidate seemed able to impose himself this time. A series of scandals had discredited them and non-Italians were now in the majority. Many felt that the Church needed regenerating. Wojtyła was not Italian; he came from a communist country, his doctrinal positions were impeccable, he didn't make any mistakes and he was very modest. Two cardinals gave him a great deal of support: Franz König in Vienna, who canvassed the Europeans, and John Krol in Philadelphia, who stumped for the North American votes. In their eyes, Wojtyła had all the qualities for the moment: a pope who was "pastoral", intellectual, young and sporty, and with a good knowledge of geopolitics.

Wojtyła was calm and impassive and adopted a low profile. His old friend Cardinal Deskur resumed his old role of go-between by having him meet all the useful figures. Dinners, meetings and walks took place one after the other in Saint Peter's Square. Joseph Ratzinger, who represented a German group, found Siri too doctrinal, but for his part he was looking for a not too liberal candidate. The liberal bloc, on the other hand, found Wojtyła free of Italian intriguing, pastoral in attitude, and always prepared for intellectual discussion. For the conservatives, his anti-communism was a guarantee. Wyszyński was stupefied by what was happening: he thought that Wojtyła wasn't well known enough or experienced enough. On the eve of the vote, it was he, however, who reassured a doubting Wojtyła and ordered him to accept his fate. Wojtyła was elected by 99 votes out of 108; he was the first non-Italian pope for 450 years, at only 58 years old.

Bodyguard

After the news of John Paul II's election, there was a huge surge of patriotism in Poland. The streets filled with people and the crowds converged on the churches. According to a report by the Stasi, which had agents in Poland, "on the streets of Cracow, people embraced each other and got on their knees in the streets. Celebrations lasted throughout the night, and small Masses were conducted impromptu throughout the city. The next day, a solemn service was held before the cathedral of Cracow."[6]

Another German agent of the Stasi, a member of the German Bishops' Conference (code name "Clemens"), was in Cracow the same day. He described the celebration as a national feast day and noted that many were

predicting a major role for Poland in international affairs, with, on one hand, President Carter's security advisor, Zbigniew Brzeziński, and, on the other, Pope Wojtyła. A CIA report, drawn up three days later, thought that the election would make it more difficult for the Soviet regime to keep turbulent Poland under its thumb. It highlighted other centrifugal forces at work in the Soviet empire: the Ukrainian Uniates and the Catholics in the Baltic States and in Byelorussia (modern Belarus).

The Polish Politburo, meeting urgently, was convinced that this election was the result of an American plot, with the help of West Germany. For the Polish leaders, it was the US National Security advisor, Brzeziński, himself of Polish descent, who had hatched the whole scheme.

The new Pope did not let the Vatican bureaucracy have anything to do with the management of affairs with the communist countries of the Eastern bloc. This became his private domain. The Curia discovered, to its shock, that current affairs often had to wait for the Pope to finish with his Polish priorities (which in his mind meant all the Eastern bloc countries). On the day of his inaugural Mass, John Paul II met the Cardinal Archbishop of Prague, František Tomášek. He also promised his support to the Latvian and Lithuanian bishops who had come to Rome for the occasion. On the same day, he asked the Polish president to be allowed keep his passport, a sign of his attachment to his national identity.

From the first days of his pontificate, Wojtyła was intensely active diplomatically. He mediated between Argentina and Chile, who were about to start a war. He opened up a new era of relations with the East. The beginnings were cautious and subtle: John Paul II resumed and intensified the contacts made in the context of the Ostpolitik begun by Paul VI. The first exchanges of messages with Edward Gierek, Poland's First Secretary, were courteous. The Kremlin was clearly more perturbed at seeing a Pole sitting on the throne of Saint Peter. The USSR minister of foreign affairs, Andrei Gromyko, went to Rome in January 1979. The Pope assured him of his desire to continue dialogue and insisted on the importance of religious freedom in the USSR. After his election, John Paul II envisaged a pilgrimage to Poland, on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the death of Saint Stanislaus. The Poles accepted, but Brezhnev was furious. He could see there a major strategic risk.

Cardinal Villot died on 9 March 1979. The Pope chose to replace him with Cardinal Casaroli, a symbol of Paul VI's Ostpolitik. It was a shrewd

choice, which would reassure the Eastern bloc countries (quite clearly Wojtyła would not let anybody have any latitude in this sphere) and, above all, the Italian Casaroli knew how to get the mostly Italian Curia to work.

As regards the Eastern bloc countries, the Pope would rely on confidants like the Czech Jozef Tomko, who was consecrated a bishop and promoted to the position of representative of the bishops' synod. He became a cardinal in 1985. According to the account of Zbigniew Brzeziński, Tomko took charge of the operational management of clandestine activities involving the Eastern bloc Churches.[7] Brzeziński remembers meeting a priest in his office coming clandestinely from the USSR, disguised as a worker, who gave him and Tomko a very detailed report on the situation on the ground.

The Pope's entourage became more Polish very quickly. A "Polish mafia", as the gossips would say, replaced the "Milanese mafia". The first of them was the Pope's personal secretary, Father Dziwisz. The Pope created a Polish section in the Secretariat of State, headed by Father Józef Kowalczyk. A John Paul II Foundation was created in the Polish house in the Via Cassia, where Dziwisz, Kowalczyk and a few others met under the iron rule of Cardinal Władysław Rubin, a Ukrainian Pole, who was responsible for the Polish diaspora and who was appointed in 1980 to head the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.

Other trusted prelates joined this group: the Croat Franjo Šeper; Mgr Marcinkus, head of the IOR; the Lithuanian Audrys Bačkis, under-secretary for foreign affairs; the Czech John Bukowski; and the Slovak Jozef Tomko. To these can be added the Pole Adam Boniecki; the Hungarian Lajos Kada; the Romanian Trajan Crisan, secretary of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints; and the Pope's interpreter, the Polish Jesuit Stanisław Szłowieniec. This little group increased in size with the addition of other people who were too discreet to be spotted. It made up de facto a secret service managed directly by the Pope, via Dziwisz. All were well versed in the ways of secrecy. "All the Polish prelates had the same reflexes," as Bernard Lecomte relates,[8] "switching on the radio during sensitive conversations to prevent anybody from listening, surrounding themselves with trustworthy people. Besides, forty or so permanent Poles—ecclesiastics, lay people, priests—found themselves spread out among the different departments of the Vatican." The Pope had an insatiable appetite

for information and always asked the Curia for more. He made use of each meal to receive guests and question them.

Everybody in Moscow was aghast by Wojtyła's election. The head of the KGB, Andropov, asked his men for an explanation. According to the analysis made by the KGB's First Directorate, the election was the result of a conspiracy between Cardinal Krol and Zbigniew Brzeziński, though it was impossible to discover how the two men could have called the shots.

The Politburo asked for a psychological analysis of the new pope. According to the report, from now on the Vatican would be more aggressive in its relations with the socialist states, especially concerning the appointment of bishops. The report recommended adopting a less rigid attitude towards spiritual values, to avoid creating conditions that would strengthen the Church. But as Bernstein and Politi remarked, this prophetic analysis was too subtle for the Brezhnev-era heads.[9] Moscow was taken by surprise by how fast papal initiatives were taken, such as the Pope's the trip to Poland. Simply mentioning the negotiations sent Brezhnev into a fury.

The KGB reinforced its presence in Rome. The Abamelek Villa was a vast, enclosed compound located one kilometre to the south of Saint Peter's Square. It belonged to a family of the Russian nobility. The Soviet Embassy had bought it after the war to house its diplomats. According to the Italian secret services, when work was done to enlarge the place, tunnels were dug linking them with the labyrinth of catacombs situated below the Vatican.

Several large antennae were visible from the outside. This was quite simply a listening centre connected to the Vatican telephone lines. Decades earlier, Pius XII had discovered that Italian Communist telecommunications employees were listening in on the telephone conversations between Castel Gandolfo and the Vatican. He preferred to summon the Curia civil servants to the summer residence and give them his instructions directly.

Tomasz Turowski, the former Polish ambassador, started his career as a spy, infiltrating the Society of Jesus in Rome from 1977 to 1980, then Radio Vatican and the Synod of Bishops. According to his testimony, at the beginning of John Paul II's pontificate "there were more spies in the Vatican than in the James Bond films. There were the services of the Eastern bloc, there was the CIA, there were Chinese spies, and I suspect that there were also the Italians. Several priests were very close to the Eastern bloc intelligence services. One of them, whose code name was "Russian", who

transmitted information to the Polish services, worked until recently in the Vatican for Pope Francis. I remember at the time of John Paul II, at the high point of the Cold War, I had pointed out defects in the Vatican's security, such as the fact that there was only one man to guard the lift leading to the papal apartment."[10]

At the time, listening techniques were increasing rapidly in sophistication. "In the sixties listening techniques already existed which enabled the slightest vibrations of a glass windowpane of an office in which somebody was speaking to be picked up at some distance. The vibrations were then translated into speech […] This technique needed an agent to be present permanently inside the Vatican."[11] According to Turowski, the Vigilanza (the Vatican's internal security service) had to replace Marcinkus's windows with sealed and armour-plated windows, which were too thick for the listening devices.

During the pontificate of John Paul II, it was thought that three or four services listened in on the telephones. Each call between the Vatican and Poland was therefore much listened to. Vatican employees believed that the Vigilanza also listened to the internal lines. This was why it was not uncommon to see a priest or a lay employee of the Curia rush to a telephone booth in the Italian post office, near Saint Anne's Gate, to make a sensitive call.

Under John Paul II the Vigilanza, directed by Camillo Cibin, numbered some 120 people. Some of its officers came from the Pontifical Gendarmerie, created in the 19th century. They were mainly guards who patrolled and checked visitors' papers. Others were investigators in civilian dress or in religious garb. The service was in close contact with the Italian police. At certain moments, it recruited foreign advisors, generally former agents from various services. A special unit investigated thefts, break-ins and other crimes. A non-official service carried out telephone bugging and investigated suspect people: this unit was directly accountable to the Secretariat of State.

Marcinkus never dies

Among the burning issues he was going to have to deal with, John Paul II knew that the IOR was near the top of the list. But he counted on moving in

his own time. On 1 December 1978, he met Marcinkus for a private audience. The Pope had been given the report on the IOR handed to his predecessor. Both men could speak in Polish, which in Marcinkus's case gave a good impression. He and Wojtyła were foreigners in the very Italian Curia system. Rather than tackle the financial questions head-on, John Paul II suggested that Marcinkus accompany him on his next trip to Mexico, as he had done with Paul VI. The hours spent travelling could be spent in consultation and would enable them to develop a good working relationship. And, importantly, at their first meeting, Marcinkus relieved John Paul II of an embarrassing dossier, as Gérard Posner has shown.[12]

A financial scandal was threatening to compromise a monastery of Pauline monks in the Philadelphia region of the United States. These monks were the guardians of the national sanctuary of Our Lady of Czestochowa. An internal inquiry had revealed that the Pauline fathers had misappropriated no less than $20 million worth of charitable contributions, had taken part in out-and-out wheeling and dealing (they had ceded part of a cemetery, for which they were responsible, to a real estate developer) and, to crown it all, they were living a notoriously dissolute life, quite out of line with their vows of chastity. They drove about in sports cars, wore luxury watches, maintained mistresses, and so on. After investigating, Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia asked for the vicar-general of the monastery, Father Michael Zembrzuski, to be relieved of his functions and the monks punished.

The matter was referred to John Paul II, who refused to follow the recommendations of the internal inquiry. The faithful were asking for their donations to be refunded, amounting to some $5 million, and threatening to go to the American courts. As soon as John Paul II informed Marcinkus of the problem, the latter suggested he deal with everything and immediately sent the sum needed to put the fire out. According to Posner, this action enabled Marcinkus to cement his relationship with the Pope and restore his compromised position within the Vatican. He set himself up as the man for special business operations, able within a short time to find the secret funds needed to carry out the Pope's instructions, anywhere in the world. Loyal, discreet, resourceful, Marcinkus appeared to be an ally, able to help John Paul II in his crusade against communism.

* * *

The previous month, after carefully examining the Ambrosiano's book-keeping, the Bank of Italy produced a 500-page report. The inspectors had not managed to discover who really held the bank's foreign subsidiaries nor where the money had gone to. But it was enough for an examining magistrate, Judge Alessandrini, to decide to open a criminal inquiry into Calvi and the bank, charging them with manipulating exchange rates and with tax evasion. A week later, the judge was driving his son to school, as he did every morning, in his orange Renault. After dropping him off, he stopped at a red light, where his car was surrounded by five masked men. They executed him. Television news showed Alessandrini slumped over the steering wheel of his Renault.

Apart from the Calvi affair, the judge was investigating Aldo Moro's death. The investigation established that the murderers belonged to an extreme far-left group, Prima Linea. But during the weeks following the tragedy, all Rome was buzzing with rumours that the judge had been killed for having attacked the Ambrosiano.

Revelation followed upon revelation in a report by Giorgio Ambrosoli, the lawyer appointed by the Bank of Italy to liquidate the assets of Sindona's Banca Privata Italiana. He showed that Sindona had stripped the assets of the bank, and those of several others in Switzerland and in Italy, in order to buy Franklin National Bank in the United States. The most embarrassing finding for the Vatican was that in August 1972, at the time Calvi bought the Banca Cattolica del Veneto, which had annoyed Albino Luciani so much, Sindona had transferred $6.5 million to one of Calvi's offshore institutions. This money, wrote the liquidator, "was probably commission paid to an American bishop and to a Milanese banker": in other words, Marcinkus and Calvi. At the request of the Bank of Italy, Ambrosoli did not reveal their names.

A short while later, in December 1978, Ambrosoli started to be harassed on the telephone by anonymous calls from people with strong Sicilian accents. "You're going to die like a dog!" one could hear on the recorded call. Though he clearly realised that he risked losing his life, Ambrosoli continued with his job. He exchanged information with the anti-Mafia police in Palermo to find out if Mafia chiefs were in business with Sindona or Calvi. According to his sources, Sicilian heroin traffickers had used Sindona to launder tens of millions of dollars through his Italian and Swiss

banks. Ambrosoli shared his findings with the American courts. The net began to tighten around Sindona.

On 11 July 1979, at the end of the day, Ambrosoli left his Milan office to go home. As he got out of his car, three people came up to him; one of them asked him with an Italian-American accent if he was “il Dottore Ambrosoli”. He confirmed that he was. The man drew a 357 Magnum from his pocket and pumped five bullets into his chest. The lawyer crumpled to the ground. His wife, who had heard the shots, rushed over. He was still alive but died on the way to hospital.

The FBI identified the man who might be the killer: the mafioso William Arico, 45, nicknamed the “Exterminator”. He was snitched on by a *pentito* (a repentant mafioso), Henry Hill, who was soon to become famous: he was the character impersonated by Ray Liotta in Martin Scorsese’s film *Goodfellas*. In the autumn of 1978, Hill sold weapons to Arico, who told him that Sindona had recruited him for a contract in Italy. Hill met him again shortly after Ambrosoli’s death, which was on the front pages of the newspapers. Arico pointed to the photo: “That’s the guy I bumped off!” When the FBI got the information, Arico was already in prison for stealing jewels. But when the agency wanted to question him, he escaped miraculously from prison on Rikers Island. The Italian courts demanded Sindona’s extradition, but he had just been sentenced in the Franklin National Bank affair and had to serve out his sentence in the US.

* * *

Despite the difficult circumstances, Marcinkus wasn’t miserly in his support for Calvi. In December 1980, he approved the purchase of $65 million of bonds issued by the foreign subsidiaries of the Ambrosiano. A true rescue operation in heavy seas. But it was only a moment of respite for Calvi, who used up his cash more and more quickly. And that wasn’t all. As Sindona had clearly become “radioactive”, Marcinkus asked two cardinals to testify with him in his favour. Sindona’s American lawyers exulted. But the new Secretary of State, Casaroli, was furious when he learned of the initiative. He forbade the planned recording of the video tape. Marcinkus was forced to comply. Casaroli did not stop there. With one of his assistants, Archbishop Luigi Celata, he asked for General Santovito, the SISMI’s head, to obtain all compromising information about Marcinkus.[13]

Santovito presented it to Francesco Pazienza, one of his confidants, who would be in charge of the investigation. He was a strange person whom we will come across again several times. Pazienza was the scion of a family of the lesser nobility. A lover of scuba diving, in 1969 he set up an underwater engineering firm, joined a French oceanographic company, and at the same time became part of Captain Jacques Cousteau's team. According to Fabrizio Calvi,[14] in the second half of the 1970s he met Alexandre de Marenches and his chief of staff, Michel Roussin, and started working with them.

In a judgment given in Rome in 1985, Pazienza was described as working for the French secret services. After Captain Cousteau's little fishes and big sharks, Pazienza took on the world of finance by working for a company belonging to the billionaire Akram Ojjeh, an intermediary for big contracts with Arab countries.[15] He also made contact the Vatican. Mgr Achille Silvestrini, minister of foreign affairs, made use of him. According to Calvi, he met Arafat at the Vatican's request. Pazienza had an eclectic range of contacts; he was also to be seen with people from the Camorra or the Cosa Nostra.

In 1979, SISMI's head, General Giuseppe Santovito, recruited Pazienza as a private advisor (no doubt on Marenches's recommendation). He thrived in the service for three years while still pursuing other international ventures. Through the SISMI, Pazienza got to know the American Michael Ledeen. This journalist and occasional collaborator of the CIA published work in the *Roma Daily American*, which was financed by the CIA and Sindona. As the presidential election approached, he sought to discredit Jimmy Carter so as to help Ronald Reagan. Pazienza suggested exploiting the link between the brother of the president, Billy, and the Libyan leader Qaddafi, and thereby shock American public opinion. The eccentric Billy had allowed himself to be invited to Libya. The article which Ledeen wrote created a sensation.[16]

Pazienza rendered other services to the Americans: two missions to Beirut for General Haig in 1981, an exploratory mission in 1982 to explore the possibilities of overthrowing Qaddafi, trips to Central America at the request of the CIA boss Bill Casey in 1983, and finally a mission to the Seychelles to persuade the authorities there to maintain an American listening station.

It seems certain today that Pazienza was also involved in some of the "strategy of tension" operations in Italy. When sentencing Licio Gelli in November 1995, the final court of appeal confirmed the existence of a vast subversive alliance composed of elements from disbanded neo-fascist movements, among them, notably, Licio Gelli, the head of the P2 lodge, and also Francesco Pazienza. In particular he was accused, along with General Musumeci, of placing a suitcase of explosives on a train in January 1981, of the same type as those used during the attack on Bologna the previous year, in order to throw a red herring in the way of investigators. The P2 scandal forced Pazienza to resign officially from the SISMI in April 1981.

Pazienza must have been like a duck taking to water when it came to looking for compromising files. In Switzerland, he found traces of payments by the IOR to ultra-conservative politicians in several countries. But instead of reporting them to Casaroli, he went over to the other side and decided that Marcinkus might be a more interesting customer. He asked for a meeting with him. Here is the account he gave to Gerald Posner:

> "I have been hired to fuck you," Pazienza told the IOR chief. Marcinkus did not show any visible sign of surprise.
>
> "What do you intend to do?" Marcinkus asked.
>
> "Nothing."
>
> Pazienza got what he wanted: a bond of loyalty.[17]

Marcinkus had won again.

17

THE THEOLOGY OF THE GUN

“Be a patriot: kill a priest!”

From a Salvadorean junta tract

Father Gustavo Gutérriez, a student chaplain in Peru, held a conference in Medellín in 1968 entitled “Towards a Theology of Liberation”. In Latin America, the policy of development was an astounding failure and the dominance of the powerful just intensified. The answer was to tackle the root of the problem: the dependence of poor countries on the rich. And within the poor countries, all forms of oppression had to be fought. From that came the idea of “a preferential option for the poor”, demanding justice, food, education in the name of the Gospels. This had a resounding impact. The Latin American Episcopal Conference welcomed it warmly. The first Catholic congress devoted to the “theology of liberation” took place in Bogotá in March 1970 and July 1971.

During the Medellín meeting, only a few of the bishops understood all the implications of the text they were signing. But the leaders of the South American dictatorships realised that their traditional ally, the Church, was turning against them. Persecuting priests and nuns only made the bishops more furious. After several years, the Church was at war with the dictatorial regimes in several Latin American countries. At the end of the 1970s, more

than 850 priests and nuns had been martyred. Defending the poor had become the stance of the majority of the bishops.

The victory of the Marxist-inspired Sandinista front in Nicaragua, on 19 July 1979, only increased the concern within certain ecclesiastical quarters, and the Church split into two camps: support for or condemnation of the Front. In the same year, in El Salvador, a civil war broke out, the cruellest and bloodiest that Latin America had ever known. While the *campesinos*, the students and the reformists defied the military government, the Jesuits, as the spokesmen of the poor, were ordered to leave the country. They refused and a number of priests were assassinated. There were reports of brutality towards clerics everywhere: Brazil, Guatemala, Paraguay, Ecuador, Argentina, Bolivia and Uruguay. The conservative Archbishop of Colombia, Alfonzo López Trujillo, the secretary of the Latin American Episcopal Conference, was among those who wanted to fight what they considered Marxist attempts to infiltrate the Church. He was preparing another conference in Puebla, Mexico, in 1979, which the Pope was expected to attend. Trujillo tried to promote the idea of a third way between capitalism and communism. But despite meticulous preparation, he was defeated. The bishops confirmed the positions adopted at Medellín.

The Archbishop has been killed

The Archbishop of El Salvador, Óscar Arnulfo Romero, took part in the meeting of the Episcopal Conference and was introduced to John Paul II there for the first time. Romero had been appointed archbishop at the beginning of 1978 because of his not very political profile. But shortly after he was enthroned, his friend the Jesuit priest Rutilio Grande was gunned down by militiamen close to the regime. Filled with indignation, Romero became a defender of human rights and of the peasants, and attracted the regime’s hostility. John Paul II didn’t know South America very well and trusted the opinions of his advisors on the theology of liberation, which became above all a quasi-Marxist movement. Romero continued his protest against political murders in El Salvador, and several bishops distanced themselves from him. On 17 February 1980, Romero officially asked President Carter to stop military aid to El Salvador. Two days later there was a bomb attack on the premises of the Catholic radio station, then on the

Catholic University library. Romero now slept in a different place every night, when he was able to sleep.

Meanwhile, Cardinal Silvio Oddi, the head of the Congregation for the Clergy, was about to transfer the unruly Romero to another post. On Sunday, 23 March, Romero once again deplored the recent government repression in his sermon. He called on National Guard soldiers and the police to stop killing their peasant brothers. The next day he was executed by a bullet in the chest as he was saying Mass in a hospital chapel. The Pope refrained from making any public declaration.

Even Romero's funeral was dramatic. During the service, explosions were heard outside. There was shooting in the square in front of the church. The crowd fled panic-stricken, then flowed back into the church. The tally was 40 dead. The government blamed left-wing extremist groups. Bishops from various countries present that day contradicted this version and affirmed their solidarity with Romero's mission. We know today that Romero was killed by soldiers under the command of Major Roberto D'Aubuisson.

On 2 December 1980, three American nuns and a woman lay missionary were murdered on the Santiago Nonualco road in El Salvador, after being raped by soldiers. The Carter administration suspended its military aid, but this was resumed a few weeks later when Reagan entered the White House. The Salvadorean examining magistrate in charge of the case was himself murdered. A United Nations inquiry concluded that the murders were premeditated. Those responsible were protected by the head of the National Guard, high-ranking army officers and American officials.

* * *

In Nicaragua there was a "people's church" which was supportive of the Sandinista authorities, valuing its social policies: literacy, free medical care, agrarian reform, housing loans, and so on. Five members of the junta were members of the clergy or of religious organisations, in particular Father Ernesto Cardenal, the minister of culture. The Vatican thought that they should resign and submit to the rule of the Church.

As soon as Reagan came to power, the CIA financed the "Contras" guerrillas. But in December 1982, Congress obliged Reagan to stop the CIA from providing material or military training intended to overthrow the

Nicaraguan authority. The Reagan administration looked for alternative ways of continuing its support. This was the origin of the famous “Iran–Contra” affair,[1] the sale of weapons to Iran to finance the Sandinista guerrillas.

In 1981, the CIA started financing Church dignitaries who were faithful to Rome and sent them information about their priests. One of the beneficiaries was Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo. According to the testimony of the deputy director of the National Security Council, John Poindexter: “We would brief the bishops [in Nicaragua] on what we thought the Nicaraguan government was going to do, and what we thought the leftist organizations in El Salvador [where established church bishops also received funds] were up to. This would be done directly through the bishop in Nicaragua.”[2]

When, at the beginning of 1983, members of the Senate and House of Representatives intelligence committees discovered that Archbishop Obando had received $25 000 from the CIA, they feared a new scandal that could tarnish the CIA. Casey was forced to promise that he’d stop payments. Naturally, he had no intention of doing so. Back at the Agency, Casey told one of his subordinates to find another channel.

Despite these efforts, a large part of the South American clergy was starting to swing its support in favour of the Sandinista government. Casey and William Clark, the National Security Advisor, encouraged the Pope’s entourage to plan a trip to Nicaragua so he could put things in order there. The Vatican was indeed convinced that the popular Church denied the Pope’s authority.

In February 1981, a Spanish priest working in Guatemala was visiting the families of tortured and murdered peasants when he himself was executed. The following day, the American government announced that it was going to increase its armed support for El Salvador. The head of the CIA, William Casey, called on the nuncio in Washington, Archbishop Pio Laghi, to complain that the Latin American Episcopal Conference was hostile to President Reagan. Laghi organised an audience with the Pope for General Vernon Walters, himself a Catholic.

In El Salvador and Guatemala, the terror escalated. Romero’s successor, Archbishop Arturo Rivera y Damas, was close to him in his ideas. He

explained to the media that the Salvadorean opposition was waiting above all for political recognition and peace negotiations.

In 1982, in Guatemala, Amnesty International listed some 2 600 Indians massacred by government troops in four months. In Argentina, a bishop died in a car accident; this was denounced as an assassination. In June 1983, the chaplain of the Salvadorean armed forces, Bishop Joaquín Ramos Umaña, was killed by a bullet to his head.

Archbishop Rivera y Damas was almost as virulent as Romero, his predecessor. Despite financing and training supplied by the CIA, it became clear that the Contras, who were not particularly motivated, were doomed to failure. In 1987, a peace plan was proposed to the White House out of the blue by the president of Costa Rica and it ended in a way out of the crisis in 1992. But in 1989, six Jesuit priests who were taking part in the peace negotiations were killed at the Catholic university of San Salvador. In the early hours of 16 November 1989, an elite unit of the Salvadorean armed forces entered the premises of the University of Central America, which was directed by the Jesuits in San Salvador, and executed its rector, Father Ignacio Ellacuría, as well as five other Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her 16-year-old daughter.

In a much-awaited outcome, on 11 September 2020, a Spanish court of justice sentenced the retired Salvadorean Colonel Inocente Orlando Montano to 133 years' imprisonment for acts of state terrorism and the murder of the six priests, their housekeeper and her daughter. It was the culmination of several decades of work by the victims' families, the Jesuit community and organisations for the defence of human rights. The judgment relied on the innovative judicial concept of "universal jurisdiction", which was now applied in the Spanish courts.

The American archives, once declassified by the decision of the Clinton administration, supplied clear proof of the guilt of the soldiers even though there had been a massive cover-up. Embassy wires, CIA reports and Defense Intelligence Agency reports described how the Americans authorities had reluctantly realised that it was their own allies in the El Salvadorean Armed Forces (ESAF) who had ordered and carried out these murders.

The Salvadorean government refused to cooperate with the Spanish tribunal, thereby delaying the judicial procedure for years. But in 2017 the United States decided to extradite Montano, who was working in a sweet

factory near Boston, to Madrid. Even if he was only one of the nineteen senior officers charged, his sentencing was a symbolic victory.

For the Reagan administration, no battle was more important than that against the theology of liberation. It threatened Rome's control of the South American Church and it risked gaining ground on other continents.

Subversion is everywhere

In the US itself, the FBI spied on prelates suspected of having Marxist connections. Among them were the Archbishop of Seattle, Raymond Hunthausen, and the auxiliary bishop of Detroit, Thomas Gumbleton, who opposed the arms race and nuclear warfare. At the end of 1983, the Vatican ordered Hunthausen to be investigated and withdrew most of his authority by appointing an auxiliary bishop who had the last word in case of disagreement. This decision was seen as a warning to other prelates. The bishops of some countries, in particular the Germans, criticised the American bishops for denouncing nuclear deterrence.

Several American organisations, some of them manipulated by the CIA, intervened in countries of the South, without being particularly discreet. This was the case with the American televangelists who set themselves up in Central America, such as Pat Robertson, who supported the Contras regime with his powerful Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) and invited dictators onto his television programmes. He even appeared alongside Roberto D'Aubuisson, one of those responsible for murdering Archbishop Romero. His viewers' donations enabled him to transfer millions of dollars' worth of "humanitarian aid" to the Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras regimes. In Guatemala, he supported the dictator Ríos Montt, who converted to the Pentecostal church Iglesia Verbo. Snubbed by the US, Ríos Montt sought Roberston's support to reburnish his image and present himself as the standard-bearer of the anti-communist struggle.

During Ríos Montt's eighteen months in power, more than 15 000 people were assassinated, among them Catholic priests and hundreds of catechists. This did not prevent Robertson from presenting him as "an example of what God could do when his people were in power".[3] The evangelists from the United States had a free hand in bringing the Good

Word to the Indians. Catholic bishops were regularly insulted and threatened, including Ríos Montt's own brother, who was forced to flee the country. To be fair, one must add that some evangelical pastors who did not support the atrocities of the regime were in turn persecuted. A dozen or so were assassinated and 49 "disappeared" for good. Ríos Montt was overthrown by his own army in August 1983. During his reign, the Pentecostalists seized the opportunity to convert a quarter of the population. This offensive, carried out by groups of American evangelists who managed to raise millions of dollars, added to the troubles of the Catholic bishops, who wondered if this fundamentalist project was not directed by Washington.

Among the forces at work, we have to look at another neo-conservative institution, the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD), created in 1981. Described as "the official seminary of the Reagan administration", the IRD, working closely with the State Department, produced articles and conferences on El Salvador and Nicaragua. It also drew up a confidential newsletter sent to friendly governments and companies in the region to denounce the trade unions and leftist plots within the Church. In 1985, the IRD organised a conference on religious freedom sponsored by the State Department. Despite this lobbying, the Bishops' Conference did not stop denouncing atrocities or criticising the United States' Central American policy.

The American secret services' activities in the region, beginning with the CIA, were gradually uncovered by the inquiries of various journalists. The support given to the Contras soon became evident. Even an instruction manual for the use of guerrillas, published by the CIA, was found. The Banzer Plan has to be mentioned in particular; it was intended to discredit the theology of liberation and suppress left-wing Catholic dissent. It was developed by the Bolivian minister of the interior, working with the CIA, at the beginning of 1975 and encouraged by the Bolivian president, Hugo Banzer. The Bolivian services especially targeted the Archbishop of La Paz, Jorge Manrique Hurtado. The means used against him consisted of placing compromising or false documents on his church premises and even closing Church properties and Catholic radio stations.[4] The Banzer Plan was approved and set in motion by nine other governments in Latin America in the 1970s.

American public opinion nonetheless increasingly opposed intervention in Central America. The Reagan administration, as a result, was reduced to calling out the bishops who were becoming politicised and using their magisterium to indoctrinate believers. The American Catholic hierarchy itself put pressure on the administration to support a peace process, but it was like talking to a brick wall.

A fundamentalist branch of the American Church, Catholics United for the Faith (CUF), has to be mentioned too. It specialised in sending dossiers to the Vatican incriminating priests whom it considered questionable. These duplicated the reports sent on by the CIA or the Washington nunciature.

Tennis with the admiral

Archbishop Pio Laghi, the pro-nuncio in Washington, had served in Nicaragua and in Argentina, where he didn't exactly make a name for himself by criticising the military junta and its atrocities. He was to be seen playing tennis with Admiral Emilio Massera, one of the bloodiest leaders of the junta. Laghi tried to keep a low profile, but he regularly found himself in the newspapers because of the Vatican's disciplinary measures against American archbishops. Declassified American archives, consulted by Frédéric Martel, show that he was a CIA informer.

> In a series of memos from 1975 and 1976 which I possess, Laghi told the American ambassador and his colleagues everything. Before them, he pleaded the cause of the dictators Videla and Viola, who were "good men" wanting to "correct the abuses" of the dictatorship. The nuncio cleared the military of their crimes, saying that the violence came as much from the government as it did from its "Marxist opposition". He also denied, in front of the American agents, that priests had been persecuted in Argentina. (At least a dozen had been assassinated.)

> According to my sources, Pio Laghi's homosexuality may explain the position he took and may have played a role in his proximity to the junta—a pattern which was commonly found. Of course this did not mean his collaboration was inevitable, but it made him vulnerable in the eyes of the military, who knew of his leanings and could have forced him to remain silent. However, Laghi went further: he chose to associate himself with the gay fascist mafia which surrounded the regime.[5]

Laghi's American counterpart was William Wilson; he was a personal friend and former tax advisor of Ronald Reagan. This well-off Californian, with interests in oil, real estate and stock exchange investments, was one of a group of businessmen who had pushed Reagan to enter politics. He was a member of the Order of Malta and got on very well with Archbishop Marcinkus, who saw to it that he had offices in the Vatican, right next to the pope's apartments. The same Wilson subsequently became involved in and helped his friend Marcinkus during the Ambrosiano scandal.

Wilson handed over to Secretary of State Casaroli a blacklist of Central American priests and nuns who deserved to be relieved of their duties. It went round the Curia. But Wilson was imprudent and this backfired on him in 1986: he paid a visit to Colonel Qaddafi on behalf of an oil company when the Reagan administration had it in for Qaddafi because he was involved in terrorist attacks. It seems that Wilson had in fact several secret meetings with the Libyan regime, with the agreement of the National Security Council. But faced with the scandal, he was naturally called back to Washington.

Without having to go through Wilson, the CIA supplied the Curia on several occasions with files on foreign diplomats accredited to the Vatican, and others on priests considered Marxist. Sometimes the CIA even furnished reports on renegade priests whose phones had been tapped. These statements were sent to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. As its head, John Paul II chose to appoint Cardinal Ratzinger, who was thought to be very powerful because it was he who defined doctrine and decided who was in the Church and who was out. His job was to deal with ideological and religious dissent within the Church. The son of a Bavarian policeman, he had grown up in Nazi Germany. He was an aesthete who was more attracted by intellectual matters than by parish life, and he chose to become a professor of theology. Once he reached 40, he changed from the progressive to the conservative camp. During Vatican II he was regarded as part of the progressive wing. It was the student movements of the 1960s that allowed him to develop. At Tübingen University, he faced his liberal colleague Hans Küng, whose seminars attracted full houses, whereas Ratzinger addressed half-empty rooms. He ended up quitting the university and returning to Bavaria. It was in 1977 that he met Wojtyła. For both of them, it was intellectual love at first sight: they shared the same desire to correct certain Vatican II "excesses".

Ratzinger was calm during storms; the Pope (who often asked him at the end of meetings if he had anything to add) listened to him very carefully. Ratzinger always sought the Pope's approval of his decisions before announcing them. In 1980, the German bishops withdrew Küng's licence to teach theology. No doubt Ratzinger had something to do with that. He maintained contacts with the Communion and Liberation movement and, through the German hierarchy, with the agencies for Third World aid operating in South America.

Our friend Pinochet

Bishop Carlos Camus was one of hundreds of Chilean priests who were persecuted under General Pinochet. In March 1987, his 18-year-old niece was arrested and tortured. Her sister's identity card was "found" at the scene of an attack. The young woman was freed after three days' custody because the bishop made a fuss. This is just one example among many.

Between 1973 and 1986, more than 150 000 Chileans were put in prison, 400 foreign priests were expelled, and several of them killed. Some bishops who took a public stand in defending human rights received death threats. Several dozen churches were set on fire or bombed by paramilitary groups. The Churches were the only institutions that the army didn't control. Pinochet could close them, claiming to act in the protection of Christian values. The Chilean Church reported that body blows, electric shocks, cigarette burns, rape and psychological torture were common practice.

Catholics, Protestants and Jews established an interreligious committee cooperating for peace, and giving financial and judicial help to the victims of repression. But in 1975 the regime applied pressure to have it disbanded. The Catholic bishops created the Vicariate of Solidarity, which, in ten years, dealt with almost 300 000 cases of human rights violations. This cost Pinochet the support of the upper classes. The regime retaliated with harassment; priests were regularly imprisoned and beaten. An Irish missionary in Santiago, Father Liam Holahan, was severely beaten for having attended the funeral of a victim of the repression. Father O'Mara, an American from Chicago, tried to intervene when he saw one of his aged colleagues being beaten up by a police officer. He was in turn arrested and beaten. He was sent back to the United States. Chilean priests were

imprisoned. Father Renato Hevia, the director of the Jesuit journal *Mensaje*, was thrown into jail for having "put the internal security of the country in danger" by criticising the state of emergency.

A French missionary father, André Jarlan, who officiated in the suburb of La Victoria, Santiago, was killed by a stray bullet while praying in his bedroom. He became a true symbol of the resistance. Pinochet expelled the other French priests in La Victoria and Father Jarlan's room, in which an altar had been set up in his memory, was wrecked. The whole chapel was destroyed.[6]

The army had no alternative but to support Pinochet. It feared a left-wing regime and judicial campaign against its men, many of whom had been torturers. In 1988, a plebiscite took place on whether to keep Pinochet as president. When he lost, this triggered a presidential election. But the military leaders kept their posts until 1993, including Pinochet, who remained commander-in-chief of the army.

* * *

The nuncio in Chile, Bishop Angelo Sodano, was a great friend of the regime. He secured protection for the Chilean Episcopal Conference by having four bishops appointed who were close to Opus Dei. John Paul II's visit to Chile in 1987 gave *de facto* support to Pinochet, who was very controversial internationally at the time. When the Pope and Pinochet appeared, both smiling, on the presidential palace balcony, this aroused strong criticism. In 1988, Sodano was called back to Rome and became minister of foreign affairs; he became John Paul II's Secretary of State in 1990, and continued to look after Chilean matters[7] and supervise appointments, like that of Francisco Javier Errázuriz, who was appointed Archbishop of Santiago despite being indulgent towards paedophile priests. According to much evidence gathered by Frédéric Martel (including that of the priest Christian Precht, one of the closest colleagues of the Bishop of Santiago), Sodano contributed to the appointment of neutral pro-Pinochet bishops, thereby excluding priests opposed to the regime.[8] Worse still, Sodano seems to have been seriously compromised, imprudently or ideologically, with the regime.

The priest Fernando Karadima, from El Bosque parish, which was attended by Pinochet's entourage, served as a chaperon to Sodano in society and in Chilean Catholic circles. According to witnesses questioned by Frédéric Martel, the parish had been infiltrated by the regime's spies, which allowed them to develop a hold over the gay Catholic hierarchy, beginning with Karadima, who was accused of multiple sexual abuses. Pinochet needed the support of the Church, so he took care to protect priests and bishops who were on his side and whom he could blackmail, if need be.

Nuncio Sodano became Karadima's great friend, with whom he said Mass in front of a congregation of high-ranking people. Karadima lavished all sorts of attention on the nuncio and introduced him to a host of young seminarians and priests. Most important, he was at the head of a veritable intelligence network which kept its eyes on progressive priests and informed Sodano so that their careers could be blocked. Some of these progressive priests were arrested by Pinochet's police without anyone knowing who had denounced them. According to Martel, Sodano had an affair with one of Pinochet's secret agents.

Rodrigo Serrano Bombal was one of the habitués of El Bosque; he was a Navy reserve officer, likely an agent of Pinochet's secret services and, it is said, a "closet" homosexual. He belonged to the DINA (Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional), Pinochet's secret services. His recruitment by the police was revealed, as was his possible homosexuality, by evidence given when the dictatorship was on trial.[9] Was Sodano a naive "Pinochetist" manipulated by the regime, a secret gay subjected to blackmail, or a bit of both?

Accused of a large number of sexual offences against young boys over several decades, Karadima was protected by the Pinochet regime, and then by Secretary of State Sodano. No doubt nobody wanted him to divulge the secrets of El Bosque. Karadima had no scruples about letting some prelates know that if he were to be dropped because of his paedophile crimes, all he knew about certain homosexual prelates (even though they were not paedophiles) would be made public.

Pope Benedict XVI, having removed Sodano, ordered a canonical trial. After being found guilty, Karadima was reduced to lay status by Pope Francis in 2018.[10] Several cardinals and bishops were put on trial by the

Chilean courts in this affair, which is still ongoing. It was a terrible blow to the reputation of the Chilean Church.

* * *

In the 1970s and 1980s, a veritable war tore the Church apart. It was an all-out battle between the supporters of the “preferential option for the poor” and the anti-Marxists, allies of the CIA, Opus Dei and the military dictatorships. The paradox was that the claims made by the first were, more or less, those of the Polish Church and the Solidarity trade union, whose most fervent supporter was John Paul II.

18

A TRIP TO POLAND

> “It is easy to be both a good Catholic
> and a good communist: the Catholics
> believe but do not practise, whereas
> the communists practise but do not believe.”
>
> Polish saying

The question of the Pope visiting Poland was brought up during a meeting in January 1979 between the Sovereign Pontiff and Andrei Gromyko, the Russian minister of foreign affairs. The visit was at first planned for 13 May, the 900th anniversary of the death of Saint Stanislaus, the patron saint of Poland. But the authorities feared there would be an outpouring of anti-communist feeling and, in the end, it was on 2 June that the first visit of a pope to a communist country took place.

Everything possible was done to put a spoke in the wheels of the Poles’ desire to meet the Pope. The Polish SB was not the only secret service mobilised to watch over the event. The head of the GDR (East Germany), Erich Honecker, asked the Stasi boss, Erich Mielke, to “cover” the Pope’s visit in Poland. It was a question of accompanying German pilgrims on the trip for the occasion of the papal visit. The Stasi had no less than 54 priests and 64 lay people on its books. On the day itself, 10 million pilgrims converged on Warsaw and the three other towns on the programme. At 10h05, at Warsaw airport, John Paul II stepped off the Alitalia plane and knelt down to kiss the ground in a gesture that was soon to become familiar.

Bells started ringing throughout the whole country. He rose and greeted the crowd. Polish flags and singing accompanied him on the entire way to the town centre.

On the first day, more than a million Poles travelled to meet him. When he welcomed John Paul II, First Secretary Gierek was ready to negotiate a generous agreement with the Polish Church. But he was taken by surprise by the Pope, who asked for official recognition of the fact that the Church also served "men and women in the temporal dimension of their lives", which was tantamount to endorsing a political role for the Church.

For nine days, from 2 to 10 June 1979, the Sovereign Pontiff travelled throughout his native country. "By Sunday evening, June 3," as Bernstein and Politi relate, "John Paul II had already succeeded, through the prophetic vehemence of his speeches, in challenging the ideology of the regime, the role of the state, the nature of Poland's alliance with the Soviet Union, and the geopolitical arrangements of Europe resulting from the Second World War."[1] The popular welcome, which exceeded all expectations, sent the Polish leaders into a state of shock, stunned as they were by the crowds' adulation. The positions the Pope took often went beyond the usual religious formulae. He was careful not to attack the powers that be head-on, but the speech he made on Warsaw's Victory Square was a veritable political programme. For Gierek the reformer, the entire policy of collaboration with the West was in danger from the Church's show of strength in front of cameras from the entire world. The government had bargained with Wyszyński about where the Pope could go in order to limit the number of places, but the Church organised convoys of the faithful from all over whole country. The Pope had played a very careful game to rouse people's consciences, without causing any flare-up of emotions. For his strategy to work, the demonstrations had to remain peaceful.

The birth of Solidarity

At the beginning of 1980, Poland's foreign debt was increasing all the time, the country was suffering from a shortage of coal, salaries had been frozen, and the prices of essential goods soared. It was therefore inevitable for strikes to break out. On 14 August 1980, the Pope was in his summer residence at Castel Gandolfo when he was informed that a stocky little

moustachioed electrician, Lech Wałęsa, had burst into the naval dockyards at Gdańsk (Danzig) using a steam shovel, followed by an army of angry workers. It was the beginning of a real counter-revolution, uniting workers, intellectuals and the Church for the first time. Day by day, then hour by hour, John Paul II received the latest information from Dziwisz, his private secretary, and from Secretary of State Casaroli. Designated the workers' representative in the naval dockyards, Wałęsa made a series of demands, including an increase in salaries, recognition of the trade unions, an easing of censorship, and the freeing of political prisoners. On 20 August, as the movement spread throughout the country, the Pope said several prayers for religious freedom and the protection of the Polish people, in front of some Polish pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square. It was just as though he gave his blessing to the strike movement.

Wałęsa expressed himself like a man of the people, but he was without any doubt a charismatic leader. He was able to sum up complex problems in an accessible way. Wałęsa's Catholic roots were an essential part of his personality. In 1967, he settled in the port of Gdańsk, in the north of the country. He was a car mechanic and hoped to start a new life. He discovered a purely Soviet-style industrial city. The naval dockyards were surrounded by metal and chemical factories, which made the area a major centre for workers.

One of the few achievements of the Gomułka regime was the low prices of essential goods, but in 1970 the government decided to raise them a great deal. On 13 December, the Gdańsk workers demonstrated, demanding that the increases be cancelled. Gomułka brought in the police. In June 1976 further increases were decreed. Wałęsa became more and more involved in trade union activities. That same year, the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR) was founded.

For the writer Adam Michnik, Wałęsa was a worker among intellectuals. He was very nationalistic but not chauvinistic, very Catholic but not clerical. He was a sort of synthesis of Poland all by himself.[2] Wałęsa was both a trade unionist intent on defending workers' rights and a fighter for liberty and democracy.

John Paul II, in the wings, found that he was a *de facto* stakeholder in the discussions. Gierek, who had to do battle with the regime's Stalinists, called in the Primate, Wyszyński, to ensure that the regime, then in a tight

corner, would not have to send in the army against the strikers. This moderating intervention reduced the tension, but it led to the repudiation of demands for freedom for the trade unions. The Pope had not been told of this and he was annoyed. On 17 August, he got the Polish bishops to publish a text demanding “the right for organisations representing the workers to be independent”. The government had to yield. The Gdańsk agreements, signed on 31 August, opened a whole new page in the history of the country: Solidarity would henceforth be able to carry out its activities in the full light of day and quite legally.

This was too much for Moscow. On 5 September, Gierek was sacked and replaced by his deputy, Stanisław Kania. The USSR sent a message to Casaroli saying that Moscow wanted Solidarity to moderate its demands or else Russian troops would intervene in Poland. But Kania had no other choice than to accept the demands. In mid-September, 35 regional trade unions met to found Solidarity. This breakthrough was welcomed by the European trade union movement. Since the beginning of the Cold War, the AFL-CIO had opened offices in Paris to support European anti-communist trade unions. Until the mid-1980s, it was the only American financial supporter of the Polish trade union.

* * *

“We must not lose Poland!” thundered Andrei Gromyko.[3] On 29 October 1980, the Politburo meeting had a sort of “every man for himself” feel about it. Even after Gierek was replaced, the Polish regime seemed to be adrift. General Jaruzelski, the minister of defence, whom the Russians considered a man “one could count on”, seemed also to be drifting and he feared that his army would refuse, if ordered, to confront the workers. It was apparent from radio programmes in Poland that socialist principles were being called into question, as was the role of the Party. From then on, all mail from Poland was intercepted by the Soviet services and the Polish press censored. Moscow was particularly frightened that its border areas with Poland might become contaminated. In the GDR, Honecker was indignant and restricted travel to and from Poland, issuing the threat of a joint intervention by Warsaw Pact forces.

The next day, 30 October, First Secretary Kania and Prime Minister Józef Pińkowski were both summoned to Moscow. They promised to be

increasingly firm, but, in Moscow's eyes, nothing or almost nothing changed. Further strikes took place a few weeks later. On 5 December a meeting was held in Moscow with the heads of the communist states. Kania pleaded against military intervention.

The SB now had instructions to penetrate the Vatican. In a telegram dated 16 June 1980, the KGB resident in Warsaw informed his central office that his Polish SB colleagues had managed to place several agents in the Pope's entourage: "Our friends have taken over important positions within the Vatican and they have access to the Pope and the Roman Congregation. Apart from experienced agents to whom JP II is favourably disposed and who can obtain an audience when they want, our friends have placed agents among the leaders of Catholic student associations who are constantly in touch with Vatican circles, and have an entrée into Radio Vatican and the Pope's Secretariat."[4]

The KGB gave the SB several objectives for its infiltrated agents: influence the Pope in the direction of a policy of détente like John XXIII's; create discord within the Vatican, as well as between the United States and the Vatican; counter the Vatican's operations in supporting the Catholic Churches in the Eastern bloc; and, finally, identify the channels through which the Polish Church supported the Church in the USSR. From then on, the press in the Eastern bloc countries painted a very negative portrait of John Paul II, presenting him as a dangerous ideologue and a perfidious supporter of the US.

In December, the Pope welcomed Wałęsa to Rome with much deference. Wałęsa was becoming a world-famous figure. During his visit, the trade union leader was "coached" by a man he had met in Warsaw a few months earlier, Luigi Scricciolo, a member of the Italian trade union confederation. Scricciolo had given advice on organisation to the Polish trade union and taken part in supplying comrades with material. Italian counter-espionage nonetheless put him under observation: according to information they transmitted to the CIA, Scricciolo was in fact a Bulgarian secret services agent. Was his mission simply to infiltrate Solidarity? Or had he intended to make Wałęsa disappear? Whatever the case, Wałęsa was warned: in future, beware of the Italian, who was too obliging.

Solidarity now demanded a five-day week of the regime. The trade union claimed to have 10 million members, or four times the Communist

Party's numbers. Besides, 750 000 Party adherents had joined Solidarity. The working class, the pillar of communism, was on the point of toppling. At the beginning of 1981, the Kremlin was aware that the Eastern bloc's economy had deteriorated greatly, not helped by the war in Afghanistan.

From Carter to Reagan

A important new actor came onto the scene in the United States. The new president, Ronald Reagan, elected in the autumn of 1980, took office on 20 January 1981. A White House link with the Vatican already existed through Brzeziński, Carter's advisor, who had the job of representing his president during John Paul II's enthronement ceremony. Both men had known each other well since Wojtyła's visit to the United States in 1976 and had corresponded regularly. Since Solidarity's beginnings, Brzeziński told the Pope's emissary, Bishop Tomko, that President Carter had given the CIA the go-ahead for an operation aimed at smuggling anti-communist pamphlets into several Eastern bloc countries, especially the Ukraine and the Baltic States. At the end of December 1980, he called John Paul II directly to warn him that a Soviet military attack on Poland was imminent. He had satellite photographs which were accurate enough to distinguish Russian military installations being built on the Polish frontier. And, above all, the CIA had first-hand information: the Agency had a mole at the highest level inside the Polish service.

In August 1972, Colonel Ryszard Kukliński, a Polish headquarters staff officer, offered the CIA his services in a letter addressed to the American Embassy in Bonn. Contact was established in a meeting in a Warsaw cemetery in January 1973. Kukliński received photographic equipment. The CIA, discouraged by the loss of several sources in the Eastern bloc countries, was very wary. The rare meetings they had with him were made during his trips abroad. For the rest, exchanges were made by means of dead letter boxes. The information supplied by Kukliński was circulated as little as possible, so as not to risk blowing his cover. As a result, they were not used as much as they might have been.

Kukliński was a prolific source of information and furnished some 30 000 documents, never accepting a single dollar. His motivation was purely ideological: to rid his country of communism.[5] The CIA managed to recruit

three other sources in the Polish Army. What they gathered was brought together under one single code name so that it would not be known there were several of them. But none of them was as amazing as Kukliński. Thanks to him, the American services were able to follow closely what the Warsaw Pact troops were doing. The National Security Agency had set up several listening stations in Norway, following a treaty signed in 1954, as conditions there were excellent for listening in to the Red Army radio broadcasts in the Baltic States.

At the beginning of December 1980, Kukliński announced that eighteen Soviet, Czech and East German divisions were massing near the Polish border using the excuse of Warsaw Pact manoeuvres. According to him, an invasion was imminent. Brzeziński called the Vatican, and asked to talk to the Pope urgently. He suggested that he mobilise the government heads of European countries with a Catholic majority to threaten the USSR with economic and diplomatic sanctions.

Carter, then Reagan, solemnly warned Moscow. At the end of the conversation with John Paul II, Brzeziński asked what number he could call him back at. He was surprised to hear the Pope asking his secretary: “Dziwisz, do I have a private line?”

The Pope’s emissaries followed one another to Moscow, carrying confidential letters. On 18 December, John Paul II received a member of the Soviet Central Committee, Vadim Zagladin. The Russians had given up intervening.

Brzeziński was the only person in the Carter administration who remained in the Reagan team, as advisor on Poland. His Polish origins and his relations with John Paul II explain this distinction. He worked closely with the head of the CIA, William Casey, a lawyer and former OSS member, who was part of Ronald Reagan’s presidential campaign team. Fiercely anti-communist, imaginative and not intimidated by rules, Casey developed an activism and engagement that knew no bounds. The Reagan administration included an unusually high number of practising Catholics in its most important positions: Casey (who went to Mass daily); Secretary of State Alexander Haig; retired General Vernon Walters, the president’s personal emissary; the National Security advisor Richard Allen; and others. This administration openly sought to develop an alliance with the Vatican.

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Another actor quit the stage: Primate Wyszyński was dying of cancer and would no longer be able to exert his moderating authority on Solidarity. The Pope was perfectly well informed of the extreme pressures that the Polish leaders were under from Moscow. The CIA interpreted the appointment of Jaruzelski, until then minister of defence, to the post of prime minister in February as a last resort so as to bring the Polish people to heel. The Pope was far better informed than the CIA on relations between the Polish government and Moscow.

Jaruzelski, who would play a key role in what followed, appeared to be in many respects quite the opposite of Wałęsa. The trade union leader was sanguine, whereas Jaruzelski remained cold and impassive in all circumstances. Wałęsa was charismatic, Jaruzelski dull. The Poles got used to his stiffness and to his dark glasses (which he wore to protect his eyes, injured during his time in a Soviet labour camp). He had grown up in an environment in which the USSR was detested. During World War II, the Soviets had sent his father to a labour camp and deported him, his mother and his sister. But he was a realist: he was well aware that Poland was part of the Soviet sphere of influence, whether it pleased the Poles or not. He didn't support the regime ideologically but out of pure calculation. Although an atheist, Jaruzelski had been brought up by Catholic priests. In the chaos that was Europe in 1940, his time spent in a Russian officers' school shaped him and gave him perspective. Graduating at the end of 1943, he took part in the liberation of Warsaw, and then the conquest of Berlin. In 1947 he enrolled in the Communist Party. His career progressed step by step: colonel in 1954, then brigadier general in 1956, when he became the youngest general in the Polish Army. Appointed minister of defence in 1968, he dealt with the 1970 strikes with calm thoughtfulness.

In Poland the struggle continued to have the trade unions recognised. The country was once again on the brink of a strike, after the authorities tried splitting the movement with an antisemitic campaign. In West Germany KGB agents tracked down the channels taken by the money intended for Solidarity. A report dated 8 April 1981 revealed that the German Embassy in Vienna had organised the collection and transfer of 200 000 Austrian schillings to the German Embassy in Warsaw, for onward transmission to Solidarity. The West German Bishops' Conference gave the same amount and the Hanns Seidel Foundation, close to the Christian

Democratic Union, gave Wałęsa 60 000 Deutschmarks during his visit to Rome.

A counter-espionage team was put together at Stasi headquarters in East Berlin. Erich Mielke personally supervised the establishment of a crisis unit for the Stasi in the East German Embassy in Warsaw. Each East German consulate in Poland took in Stasi spies with the job of recruiting and handling local sources, among the military too and even SB agents. This goes a long way in explaining how mistrustful everybody was.

For his part, John Paul II started secret discussions with Brezhnev via the Soviet ambassador in Italy.[6] He proposed that he would dis-suade Solidarity from launching another strike if the Russians undertook not to invade Poland. An agreement was therefore signed between Solidarity and the Polish authorities, without the Russians and the Americans knowing. The Pope told this news to the CIA head, Casey, during their first meeting on 23 April. At the time, Wojtyła was far from imagining that his pontificate was only a few days away from a major incident.

19

THREE SHOTS IN SAINT PETER’S SQUARE

19 May 1981: John Paul II crossed Saint Peter’s Square in Rome, in his open vehicle, among some 20 000 faithful. As he was about to finish his second tour of the square, the Pope was hit by three 9 mm bullets. Blood flowed from his abdomen, leaving a long red blotch on his white cassock. This was the most serious wound, situated just below his stomach. The other two bullets hit his right hand and his right arm. Father Dziwisz held the Pope in his arms and murmured a prayer. In the crowd, two women were wounded: a 31-year-old Jamaican woman pilgrim, hit in the left arm, and an elderly New York woman, wounded in the chest.

After the first sounds of gunfire, all the Vatican police, the Italian police and the City of Rome police present in the square converged on the spot where the shooting had taken place. A small nun, Sister Letizia, had grasped a young man wearing grey clothes in her arms; he was brandishing a Browning semi-automatic. The more the man struggled, the more she held on to him, leaving him no chance to get away. Very quickly two carabinieri came to her rescue, seizing the weapon and handcuffing the man in grey.

Meanwhile, at Father Dziwisz’s command, the driver of the popemobile rushed to the spot where an ambulance was always parked with its engine running whenever the Pope appeared in public. The Pope was transferred to the ambulance, which then sped towards the Gemelli Policlinic, reaching it

in eight minutes. Waiting for its arrival was an intensive care unit and an operating theatre, which was operational 24 hours a day. Ever since the deaths of Paul VI and John Paul I one after the other, the Vatican authorities swore never to leave the pope without emergency medical care. At Gemelli, as a precaution there was a large stock of the A blood group, which is relatively rare. The operation lasted no less than five hours but it did stabilise the patient. The bullet aimed at the stomach missed the abdominal artery, and then the spine, by a hair's breadth.

* * *

Even before the operation was over, one of the biggest investigations ever carried out by the Italian intelligence services got under way. It mobilised hundreds of investigators in Italy, as well as the police and secret services of several dozen other countries. All the Italian state services were involved: the Carabinieri, the anti-terrorist police (DIGOS),[1] military intelligence (SISMI),[2] and the secret service (SID).[3]

The shots had been fired by a 23-year-old Turk, Ali Agça, the bearer of a Turkish passport in the name of Faruk Özgün. He didn't try to deny what he had done. The police found on him a note with the programme of the Pope's public appearances written in Turkish, 300 000 lire and a list of phone numbers. In his hotel room they found a letter demanding freedom for Afghanistan and El Salvador.

As soon as it was known who he was, it was action stations in Ankara, at the headquarters of the secret services, the MIT.[4] They realised that the world's media would not be slow in pointing their spotlights on Turkey and that they would have to cooperate as promptly as possible in the inevitable inquiry, by disclaiming any Turkish responsibility in the attack. It was quickly established that the criminal was a habitual offender, since he had at least one murder to his credit: the editor-in-chief of a centre-left magazine, *Milliyet*, who was gunned down on 1 February 1979. Imprisoned on 25 June, Agça had managed to escape from jail. Shortly after his escape, he wrote to *Milliyet* announcing that he would kill the Pope if the latter didn't give up his plans to visit Istanbul. The tone of the letter was that of an Islamic extremist, but Agça was not known to be a practising believer.

Agça was born into a family of poor peasants in eastern Turkey and studied at university, in Ankara and then Istanbul. He said he had followed a PLO training course in Beirut. Investigation of the pistol he'd used produced disturbing information. Agça hadn't acted alone. The weapon had been sold in May by a Viennese dealer of doubtful reputation (no doubt an ex-Nazi), who was already a respondent in a Soviet weapons trafficking case. The purchaser of the Browning was a Turk, Oral Çelik, who had apparently given the weapon to a compatriot who took it to Milan to hand over to Agça four days before the attack. Çelik was known for belonging to a far-right Mafia extremist movement, the Grey Wolves. He had vanished in the direction of Bulgaria, it seems.

The Italian police tried to reconstruct Agça's movements during the months and weeks before the attack. This was not easy as, initially, he continually contradicted himself. Agça stated that he had been exfiltrated to Iran after his escape from prison, though this could not be verified. On the other hand, in July 1980 (the date is important) it was established that he had been to Sofia, in Bulgaria, where he spent fifty or so days and where was given his passport. He then set off on a veritable tourist trip—Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Hungary, France, England, Belgium, Tunisia, Yugoslavia, Spain and, finally, Italy, which he reached on 15 December. He stayed in several hotels and made two further trips, to Switzerland and the Balearic Islands. He spent two weeks holidaying in Majorca from 28 April to 8 May. Agça obviously did not want for money during all this time, though he had no known source of income.

To the examining magistrate, Illario Martello, in charge of the Agça dossier, it very quickly appeared that the accused was not at all an obsessional psychopath. He was intelligent, calculating and cold-blooded, able to juggle with identities and move around clandestinely. In short, he was a hired killer, not a maniac. But in whose service was he?

The Bulgarian trail

Investigating the telephone numbers found on Agça produced a series of dizzying allegations. Out of the five Rome numbers, two belonged to the Bulgarian Embassy, one to the consulate and one to the Balkan Air offices; the last one was that of a Bulgarian diplomat. Agça at first denied knowing them. But after a year in prison, he suddenly changed his version. He had

been sentenced to life imprisonment at the end of his trial in July 1981 and had not wanted to launch an appeal, as though he was expecting to be freed or transferred soon afterwards. Nine months later, in April–May 1982, he spilled the beans and admitted meeting three Bulgarians in Rome, two of them at home; he recited the telephone number of the third from memory. This was Todor Aivazov, an embassy cashier. The other two were the assistant military attaché, Jelio Vassilev, and the assistant manager of the Rome offices of Balkan Air, Sergey Antonov. Agça was able to give his interrogators precise descriptions of the flats of both Antonov and Aivazov, where he had, it seemed, taken part in meetings. Moreover, he maintained he'd been driven on the day of the attack by two men to a house where he was given a bag containing weapons; he was then dropped off near the Vatican. According to Agça, it was agreed that Antonov and Aivazov would pick him up after the assassination and exfiltrate him in a diplomatic convoy in a Bulgarian Embassy truck.

Agça said that he'd been recruited in Bulgaria to kill the Pope by a man from the Turkish Mafia, a big cigarette trafficker named Bekir Çelenk, who had made a fortune by buying huge numbers of cigarettes from the Bulgarian state-controlled company, before fencing them as smuggled goods in Turkey. He rented a suite in a luxury hotel in Sofia and was on excellent terms with the Bulgarian secret services, which left him alone to get on with his trafficking. According to Agça, he and Çelenk met each other again in Switzerland and in Italy and he spoke with him on the phone during his trip to Majorca. Çelenk had apparently paid him regularly, using one of his underling's firms.

Çelenk promised Agça 3 million marks if he succeeded and introduced him to three Bulgarians. They were known to the Italian secret services. Antonov, who did not have diplomatic protection like Vassilev, was an officer in the Bulgarian services, the DS,[5] sometimes referred to by the initials KDS.[6] He was arrested in November 1982 and charged with complicity in the attack. The other two had left Italy several weeks earlier. Antonov swore that he spent the whole day of the attack in his office, which his team confirmed.

Agça nonetheless continued his revelations, and claimed that as soon as he arrived in Rome in January 1981 he took part in a meeting with the Bulgarians in order to plan the murder of Lech Wałęsa, whose forthcoming

visit had been announced to the Pope. Once again, Agça was able to supply details of where Wałęsa was going and where he was staying. He identified a fourth Bulgarian, Ivan Dontchev, the resident of the Bulgarian services in Rome.

There were still some unanswered questions. Why had the Bulgarian secret services wanted to recruit a man like Agça? Was it at Moscow's command or on their own initiative, and would they have been able to go in for such a huge operation in view of the potential repercussions of assassinating the head of the Catholic Church? Before answering, we have to look at what the policy of the Eastern bloc services was at this period as far as assassinations were concerned. Ever since the defection of Nikolai Kholkhov (1954) and Bogdan Stashinsky (1961), two clandestine Soviet operators sent to West Germany to assassinate anti-communist émigrés, it was known that the KGB used *fizicheskoye ustraneniye* (physical elimination). The head of the KGB at the time, Yuri Andropov, only authorised such projects case by case, taking care to weigh up the likely repercussions, the importance of the target, and the chances of leaving no traces.

Of course, one can also imagine that the operation was the initiative of the Bulgarian services, but that would raise the question of the amount of leeway they were given by the KGB. The DS had most certainly pursued a number of exiles and defectors. According to the testimony of the Russian defector Vasili Mitrokhin, there were a number of Soviet "advisors" in the DS. In the event of sensitive operations, Moscow immediately sent reinforcements. So the service worked under constant surveillance by its Soviet big brother, taking no decisions without informing beforehand the KGB resident in Sofia. The KGB could not have been ignorant of what was going on inside the KDS.

* * *

A year after the attack, the first book published on the incident—*The Drama of 13 May*, by Father Vendelin Sluguénov—accused the Eastern bloc countries. It was published in Germany by the Pro Fratribus organisation of Father Hnilica, in charge of supporting the Church in the East. A second book was published in August of the same year by Father Labo.[7] Both books refer to a SISMI note published for the first time by

Michael Ledeen, the journalist who was close to the CIA. This note turned out to be false. On 16 August in *Reader's Digest* (which had a circulation of several million copies at the time) the American journalist Claire Sterling revealed the Bulgarian lead to the public at large. She collaborated with the journalist Paul Henze in a documentary produced by NBC in September 1982. Henze also published a book along the same lines: *The Plot to Kill the Pope*.[8] Just like Ledeen, Henze was himself close to the CIA.

It must be remembered that on 1 February 1979 Agça gunned down Abdi Ipekçi, the editor-in-chief of the daily *Milliyet*, at point-blank range. The latter had just denounced the government's complicity with the Turkish Mafia. His investigation revealed similar extreme right-wing groups protected by the Turkish secret services and probably by the CIA. Ipekçi had just met Paul Henze. The Turkish journalist made the mistake of sharing the results of his investigations with Henze, who was probably operating for the American bureau in Ankara. A few weeks later he was assassinated. To appreciate the role everybody played in this story, we have to understand who the Grey Wolves are and what they do.

The Turkish trail

The MHP (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, or the Nationalist Movement Party) was created in 1969 by Alparslan Türkeş, nicknamed the "Führer" by his admirers. He compromised himself with the Gestapo during the war and spent a year in prison after the war ended. MHP's paramilitary offshoot was called the Grey Wolves. Türkeş's dream was to re-establish the former Ottoman Empire and gather together all Turcophones in the region into one nation. Once out of prison, he joined the army, which sent him for three years' training in the United States. In 1960 he supported the *coup d'état*. In 1965, with the MIT, the Turkish National Intelligence Organization, he took part in creating the Turkish Gladio, based to start off with in the CIA's Ankara premises, using a charitable organisation as a front. His openly racist political movement took part in the Turkish version of the "strategy of tension", which in 1979 subjected Turkey to a wave of attacks and assassinations. Deputy prime minister in 1975, Türkeş was in disgrace after a new military *coup d'état* in 1980. He was imprisoned and brought before

the courts. A search of his premises threw light on his links with the Gehlen networks in Germany, as well as with small Italian neo-fascist groups.

Türkeş's representative in Europe managed an import-export company in Frankfurt and was in close contact with Ruzi Nazar, a former SS member of the Turkish Legion, who had been picked up by the American intelligence services. Like many others, Nazar succeeded in selling his records to the Americans and knew how to make himself indispensable in the great anti-communist struggle. He worked for the Voice of America in Munich, where he met Paul Henze, at the time an advisor for Radio Free Europe. In 1959, both men were transferred to the American Embassy in Turkey. They got in contact with Türkeş.[9] In 1974, Nazar was back with the American Embassy in Bonn. One of his main jobs was to follow the local MHP. Türkeş's men gained control of the right-wing Turkish immigrant organisations in Germany, Switzerland and France.

The left-wing German press accused the movement of extorting Turkish workers, of organising employers' militias and engaging in trafficking various goods. It had a legal front, the Federation of Turkish Democratic Idealist Associations, which started by getting in touch with various European far-right movements. Selected Grey Wolves members were sent with their German comrades on military training in Falangist camps in the Lebanon.

Had the Grey Wolves been infiltrated or controlled by the CIA? By joining the Gladio operation, they had put themselves at the service of the CIA, thus obtaining a safe conduct for their other activities. The few army or secret service officers who dared to protest against this alliance had been eliminated or shunted aside. Consequently, the Grey Wolves were armed and trained in commando operations by the CIA, and carried out "psychological warfare" operations for them, for which they were remunerated. Their best members were sometimes sent abroad on missions, like Abdullah Çatli, who served as head of the Action Service of the Grey Wolves, and who was spotted both in Europe and in the United States (in the company of Francesco Pazienza).

Duane Clarridge was chief of the Istanbul CIA bureau, in charge of the initial contacts with the Grey Wolves. He later took over the headship of the Rome bureau.[10] He employed one of the best members of the Grey Wolves, Hiram Abas, who was sent to Beirut between 1968 and 1971. On 12

September 1980, the army took power again in Turkey. They proclaimed martial law, dissolved parliament, and banned political parties and trade unions. Several newspapers were closed down, others severely censored. There was fierce repression of the Kurds. However, to his great surprise, Türkeş was arrested and his movement attacked. The army organised political trials of the members of the MHP, with the result that the Federation of Turkish Democratic Idealist Associations in Europe had to find financial support to continue the struggle.

The CIA washed its hands of it all. It continued to finance the movement via Nazar in the Bonn embassy but did not intervene to have Türkeş freed. Though the movement was condemned to underground activity, it remained powerful. The Grey Wolves cast their net wide among the working classes. They professed to be intensely nationalist: they learned to hate the Jews, the Kurds and the Armenians.[11]

* * *

Ali Agça and Oral Çelik, his childhood friend and accomplice in the Saint Peter's Square attack, had known each other since high school. In 1976 they were waiters in a café where the Grey Wolves met in Istanbul. In the summer of 1977, Agça underwent combat training in a Grey Wolves camp. In 1978, Agça and Çelik attacked banks and shops. The Turkish Mafia used them in return for payment.

Oral and Ali worked for the powerful godfather Abuzer Uğurlu, a big arms, drugs and cigarettes dealer. On 31 January 1979, Agça gunned down *Milliyet*'s editor-in-chief, no doubt at Uğurlu's behest. He was paid 300 000 Turkish pounds, then fled the scene for a month before returning to Istanbul, where he was arrested. On 25 November, he escaped from prison with the help of friends disguised as prison guards.

As Agça was now a star, the Grey Wolves ensured he was protected. On 26 November, he posted a threatening letter to the Pope, drawn up with Oral Çelik. Agça was not disturbed. A former MIT agent admitted later having paid Agça 600 000 pounds as well as handing him the instruction files for missions to be carried out.[12] Using false papers, Agça went to Cappadocia, the fief of the Grey Wolves, and then on to Azerbaijan by using smugglers' routes. He then settled in Iran.

He returned to Turkey after three months' exile. Meanwhile a court had sentenced him to death for Ipekçi's murder. When he returned to Istanbul, he was accommodated in a luxurious villa belonging to Uğurlu. He was given a new passport, an Indian one this time, and set off for the Bulgarian border. In Sofia, he was put up in the best hotels, reserved for foreigners. He met Omer Mersan, a dealer who owned a company in Germany and who welcomed him at Uğurlu's request. Agça claimed that Mersan introduced him to Bekir Çelenk, one of the biggest Turkish pushers at the time. He is an interesting character.

Deals and dealers of all sorts

Bekir Çelenk was born near the Syrian border. In Switzerland he created his own watch company, which bought wholesale watches and fenced them as smuggled goods into Turkey. The cargo crossed the border via Bulgaria where the state-controlled company Kintex, managed by the secret services, levied its dime on all traffic. He went into business with the Grey Wolves, who furnished him with the morphine base in exchange for weapons or cash. They were on good terms with customs and the MIT. In theory Çelenk was sought by a number of police forces, but he moved about Europe without being worried. According to Agça, he had promised him a 3 million Deutschmarks bonus for assassinating the Pope.

There were almost 2 million Turks in transit in Bosnia, going to work in Germany or coming back. The Bulgarian KDS had a department entirely dedicated to watching the Turks. For a long time Todor Jivkov's regime's key man in matters of economics was Georgeï Naïdenov; he was close to the head of state. But he had taken too many liberties and made personal profits in his business, which earned him time in prison. The contraband business was transferred to Kintex, which had all the powers necessary for creating companies abroad, using airports and railway stations without any restrictions. It was a state within the state.

In the region, the MIT was the CIA's subcontractor just as the KDS was the KGB's. The pushers worked with everybody. Another Turkish dealer was Ismaïl Oflu, also connected to the Grey Wolves, who was sentenced for murder in Turkey, was expelled from Bulgaria in 1982, was arrested several times in various West European countries and was time after time freed.

According to a Bulgarian secret service agent, it was he who supplied Agça with a false passport.

On 28 August 1982, the Italian judge Palermo uncovered a large network of arms and drug dealers. Sixty-four people were arrested. But Bekir Çelenk, one of the judge's targets, escaped again. He turned himself in to the Bulgarian authorities, who proposed that the Italian investigators come and interrogate him. Çelenk was assigned to a residence and agreed to hand over his bank account references. All his assets were frozen.

Although he hadn't succeeded in sending Çelenk straight to prison, Judge Palermo arrested another dealer who was associated with him: the Syrian Henry Arsan, who managed an international transport company in Milan. The judge's inquiry showed that he supplied the morphine base imported from the Middle East to the Cosa Nostra laboratories responsible for turning it into commercial heroin, which was exchanged for weapons and ammunition to supply the Middle Eastern conflicts.

Arsan was playing a dangerous double game: a mercenary dealer on the one hand, selling arms for drugs, and an informer on the other. He got rid of his Turkish, German and Bulgarian rivals by denouncing them to the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).[13]

Another detail: Arsan's offices belonged to the Banco Ambrosiano. He was in direct contact with Calvi about his financial affairs. The Ambrosiano managed the export credits for his arms sales and helped him launder his money. Another fascinating connection: Arsan had business dealings with Licio Gelli, the Grand Master of the P2 lodge. Together they organised the sale of French Exocet missiles to Argentina during the Falklands War. Finally, Arsan worked with two shipowners, one of them being Bekir Çelenk, who shared offices in London.

Judge Palermo was informed by a director of the Italian SISMI that Henry Arsan had worked for the "services". A note from the American DEA attested that he had been an informer since 1972. What is less well known in the West is that Arsan, who traded with Bulgaria, had also agreed to work with the Bulgarian services. He took advantage of this situation to squeal on several Turkish and Arab dealers, including his associate Bekir Çelenk.

Alas, on 11 November 1983, Arsan unfortunately died in prison from a heart attack. It was suspected he had absorbed digitalis because of his blue fingertips. Judge Palermo lost a capital witness. Through Arsan, he could

just catch sight of Gelli, Calvi, General Santovito, the Cosa Nostra and the entourage of political leaders like Craxi and Andreotti. He could not finish his investigation: he was taken off the case. This incursion into the universe of the Mafia dealers, which were interested in the Bulgarian circles, was essential to an understanding of the connection with the Grey Wolves.

Agça learned his lessons

Agça was held in the high security prison of Ascoli Piceno. Although he was supposed to be kept in solitary confinement, he made friends with Giovanni Senzani, the head of the Red Brigades group, who had kidnapped the Christian Democrat councillor of Campania, Ciro Cirillo. He gave Agça Italian lessons.

At the end of September 1982, Agça was visited by a prelate called “Mgr Morante, Bishop of Ascoli”. The meeting led to nothing. Two weeks later, he was visited by the prison chaplain, Father Santini, who gave him presents from “friends” held in the same prison. According to him, these “friends” intervened and cable television was installed in his cell, which was also renovated. The priest introduced a “Mr Cutolo” into his cell, a well-dressed man who was none other than one of the bosses of the Camorra, the Neapolitan mafia. Although he was in prison, he clearly continued to direct affairs from his cell. The priest explained to Agça that if he “cooperated”, the Pope could intervene to have him pardoned.

Cutolo was about to be transferred to another prison where his safety was not guaranteed. He had negotiated with the SISMI’s General Musumeci: in exchange, Musumeci asked him to get Agça to sign a confession implicating the KGB and the Bulgarians. Agça needed a lot of coaxing but ended up by signing the document. A new visitor now took over: Pazienza.

On 27 September 1995, Agça told Judge Priore that he’d received two envoys from the Italian services (from the SISMI and the SISDE) in his prison, then two visits from Pazienza, accompanied by an American, to persuade him to accuse the Bulgarians; in exchange he was promised that he’d be freed quickly. He was then visited by another man who didn’t give his name but who gave him a written description of the Bulgarian Antonov’s flat. Agça apparently also received several friendly visits from Cutolo, encouraging him to continue in that way.

Indeed, in 1983, shortly after Antonov's arrest, Agça gave a very accurate description of his flat at 23 Via Pola, where he apparently met Antonov when preparing the attack. The only problem was that he mentioned a "sliding panel" which separated the two rooms in all the flats of the block, except in Antonov's, where it had been replaced by a curtain. This detail betrayed a briefing that had been badly put together.

Antonov's lawyer had been able to visit another flat in the same block, occupied previously by the Dominican friar Félix Morlión, the same man who had put his organisation, Pro Deo, at the service of the anti-communist struggle in the 1930s and collaborated during the war with the OSS and William Donovan. In 1944, Morlión, who had gone into exile in the United States, returned to Rome. He founded a school for members of Catholic Action, in which one learned how to counter Cominform's propaganda and secret operations. The Italian secret services (SIFAR) and the Gladio networks were among his clients. Morlión met his friends from the Italian and American services in the flat on the Via Pola, in particular Francesco Pazienza and Michael Ledeen (the man who had directed the research of Claire Sterling towards the Bulgarian connection).

As time went by, Agça became more and more forthcoming and revealed new details about the Bulgarian connection. The operation now included a Soviet agent, Malenkov, a secretary at the USSR Embassy in Sofia. He was the person behind the operation. Then Agça remembered that during his trip to Tehran, he had met the KGB resident, Kuzichkin, to discuss killing the Pope as well as other European figures. It is not known how, but the US Embassy in Rome received a letter attributed to Agça in which he clearly accused Andropov of being responsible for the attack on the Pope. Judge Martella was sceptical about the letter's authenticity but ended up by putting it on record in the file.

Roumiana Ougartchinska, who was able to question former members of the Bulgarian services, didn't believe Antonov had the necessary heft for such a plot. "Those who knew him guffawed at the idea of him at the wheel of an Alfa Romeo sports car in Rome directing a commando; they knew that a mistake had been made in the casting. Antonov drove badly, he was scared stiff of traffic and regularly ran his Lada into other cars. Antonov did not speak English. This was confirmed by his colleague from Turkish Airlines who came across him regularly at the airport. His Italian was limited; he had only learnt French. What did he speak to Agça?" (Indeed,

Agça only learnt Italian once he was in prison, *after* the attack.) Not counting the day of the attack, Antonov never left his office, according to his colleagues. Strangely enough, in his descriptions of the Bulgarians, Agça mentioned physical details which were difficult to notice with the naked eye, for example a detail about Aivazov's teeth. On the other hand, he was mistaken when identifying who was the tallest of the trio. The reconstruction of scenes became embarrassing for him when it was a matter of finding the right floor in an apartment block, whether something was on the right-hand or the left-hand side, and so on. In the end it was established that Agça had never set foot in Antonov's apartment. He had never met a KGB agent in Tehran. The resident whom he named had gone over to the West before he arrived in Iran. And when Agça was shown a photograph of the Russian in the middle of others in a photo album, he didn't recognise him.

On 29 March 1986, the trial of the Bulgarian ring ended with its acquittal, for lack of proof. For whom did Pazienza and Musumeci organise this confused outcome? On 27 December 1983, the Pope met Agça in his cell. Nobody knows what they said to each other. Agça seemed to be overcome by Wojtyła's benevolence. He whispered in his ear. The prison chaplain, Father Santini, was seized on 17 June 1983 in a big police raid on the Camorra in which 850 people were arrested.

* * *

There were a few attempts, inspired by the Eastern bloc secret services, to provide a counter-version of the plot, blaming the CIA, but they didn't stand up to close examination. Because, first of all, the Pope was the ideal pontiff in the eyes of the CIA and the White House. The CIA's declassified archives show that its leaders were really surprised by the incident and puzzled about the origins of the attacks. For example, a memo from the assistant director of operations, Robert Gates, to Casey in September 1982 concluded that "our analysts and operational bosses think that had Moscow wanted to assassinate the Pope, Agça would have been too dubious a means".[14] In December of the same year, Gates prepared a briefing for the president that concluded there was a "lack of proof". When testifying before the Senate intelligence committee in 1983, Gates admitted that the Agency had no real idea. The secret service had worked hard throughout Europe to

discover as much information as possible, hoping to find a “smoking gun”. Many leads were collected by following the trail of the weapon that Agça used, his various trips, but nothing emerged about the people behind him. Given the available analysis, Gates remained agnostic on the question. Casey was convinced that the Soviets were involved and was frustrated because he couldn’t prove it.[15]

The fate of the other Grey Wolves

Oral Çelik, Agça’s childhood friend described as the second gunman of Saint Peter’s Square, left Italy immediately after the attack and sought refuge in Switzerland. Arrested in Zurich in 1983, he was expelled to France, where he settled in Poitiers as a student. He was visited by someone who introduced himself as a policeman and suggested he change his identity so that he could pass for a member of the PKK, the Kurdish Independence Party, thus protecting himself from being expelled. In November 1986, when returning from a trip to Holland, he was arrested on the Franco-Belgian border in possession of heroin and sentenced to eight years in prison. This is what Judge Priore discovered in 1990. He had to wait until 1993 to obtain Çelik’s extradition from France. Once in Italy, Çelik chose as his lawyer Gentiloni Silveri, Licio Gelli’s lawyer.

Abdullah Çatli, the Grey Wolves’ head of special operations, who was sought for drug trafficking and murder by Interpol, met a tragic end in 1996. After a serious road accident, his body was found next to those of a police chief, the head of a Kurdish anti-independence militia close to deputy prime minister Tansu Çiller, and the director of the Istanbul police academy. On Çatli, the Grey Wolf, were found various identity cards, both true and false, as well as a police card. A scandal broke out in the Turkish press. Decades of involvement between the Turkish Mafia, the secret services and politicians were being brought out into the light. Tansu Çiller was present at Çatli’s funeral, where she declared: “Those who assassinate in the name of the state are just as honourable as those who are assassinated in its name.” This was tantamount to recognising that Çatli had worked for the Turkish state.

Çatli was the man who supervised Agça’s escape from Turkish prison and his flight to Europe, and who supplied Agça with weapons in Vienna in

March 1981, then accompanied him to Rome. According to a report by the Ministry of the Interior inspection service, which was leaked to the press, the Turkish MIT admitted that Çatli had been sent to Europe to carry out special missions, including the elimination of members of the Armenian militant organisation ASALA. In all, Çatli had committed some fifteen or so anti-Armenian attacks with his team in France and three in the Low Countries. Returning to France under an assumed name in 1982, he was put up by Oral Çelik in Poitiers. He went into drugs trafficking via Switzerland. In 1984 he was arrested in possession of 400 grams of heroin and of equipment from the Turkish consulate for issuing passports. According to a former agent of the Turkish services, the French understood all too well what he was doing and managed to get him caught, as a pretext, for drug smuggling, so as to put an end to his activities.

According to this witness, Çatli and Çelik had connections with the Turkish state, but not Agça. Çatli was sentenced in February 1986 to seven years in prison for drug trafficking, was extradited to Switzerland in 1988, and "escaped" from the Bostadel penitentiary, returning to Turkey on a diplomatic passport. Although he was still a fugitive, he appeared several times alongside senior civil servants and high-ranking army officers. An ex-officer of the MIT, Lieutenant Colonel Korkut Eken, admitted employing Çatli when he returned to Turkey to spy on various PKK leaders in Europe.

Bekir Çelenk was extradited by Bulgaria to Turkey in 1985 and died of a heart attack, like Arsan and so many others. Before he died, he declared in a statement: "The proposal [to attack the Pope] was made to me by people who are … how can one describe it?… in hidden realms. These people are officially nowhere, yet, in reality, they are everywhere, in business, in politics, in the secret services, in Freemasonry."[16]

Provisional conclusions

In Italy, as in Turkey, the secrecy that surrounded certain networks, both terrorist and business, that were close to Gladio gave their members great freedom of action. Henchmen were sought for all sorts of jobs, and their coffers were filled by all sorts of trafficking while they looked the other way. This is why it was so difficult to tell apart the missions carried out for the organisation from those for the government or the Turkish services, or

those subcontracted to other clients. But the Grey Wolves were certainly not up to carrying out a full-scale operation in Italy without local support.

Today we can reasonably conclude that the attack did not have all the marks of a secret service, be it American or Soviet. The chronology is important: when Agça wrote his threatening letter to the Pope, Solidarity had not even been established. So, if Moscow had wanted to kill the Pope, there were far simpler and more discreet ways. The Vatican was infested with Polish, Czech, and East German spies, and it would have been possible to poison Wojtyła, as was the practice at the time.

So who? Asking that question means looking for someone who had a motive, who had the means (several million dollars) and who would not back off from such a "sacrilegious" act. We can also ask whether the true intention wasn't just to wound the Pope rather than kill him. At that short distance, it was impossible for an experienced gunman to miss his target. Agça was a good shot but an amateur secret agent, not very reliable and not discreet. He left too many clues behind him when he travelled. So he could have been chosen precisely because of his past threats and programmed so that he would "fail" but that his attempt would frighten the Vatican enough for it to yield on a particular demand. Here we can propose the idea that the Mafia was behind him: it would satisfy all the criteria listed above. But it's still a theory which would need to be backed by a motive.

A new affair, a sort of tragic postscript to this attack, was to shake all Italy and involve Agça in prison in an unexpected way.

The Orlandi affair

On 22 June 1983, Emanuela Orlandi, a 15-year-old high-school girl left the neighbourhood of the Vatican shortly after 4 p.m. to go to a music lesson. Emanuela was a citizen of the Holy See. Her grandfather was Pius XI's attendant and her father was responsible for the Vatican's mail. A traffic policeman posted outside the music school said he saw her go past after her lesson and talk to an elegant man of about 30, next to a green BMW. After this she called her sister Frederica at her home and told her that she'd just been offered 375 000 lire to hand out beauty products during an haute couture parade. The sum was enormous, and aroused her sister's suspicion —she advised her to refuse and return home. At about 19h00, a high-school

friend was talking with Emanuela just before she said goodbye to take the bus home. The next day, the family reported her disappearance.

At the same moment John Paul II returned from his second papal journey to Poland.

Several weeks beforehand, on 17 May 1983, another young Roman girl, Mirella Gregori, was reported missing. The press didn't miss the opportunity to put some theories together.

* * *

Agça, who was in court for his attack against the Pope, claimed one day that Emanuela had been kidnapped by the P2 lodge, then on another day by the Grey Wolves and the Bulgarians. Seven years later, he incriminated his friend Oral Çelik, explaining that the aim of the kidnapping was to put pressure on the Vatican. There was a further version in 1997: in a letter to the judges, Agça put the blame on the Bulgarians.

When on 3 July, in Saint Peter's Square, the Pope appealed to the humanity of those responsible for the young girl's disappearance, this was tantamount to admitting that she had been kidnapped. Clumsiness or calculation? The Orlandi family was inundated with anonymous phone calls proposing negotiations, which never offered the slightest proof that young Emanuela was still alive. For the Italian intelligence services, who scrutinised every voice recording, these messages came from various fantasists and delusionists. Other messages grabbed people's attention a lot more. The Rome CBS correspondent, Richard Roth, received a letter posted from the US demanding Agça's freedom in return for Emanuela. When the letter was studied closely, it showed that its authors were aware of confidential information (for example, they knew the contents of a letter addressed by the Italian president, Sandro Pertini, to the family).

The journalist Clare Sterling claimed in turn that the kidnapping was a put-up job by the Bulgarians to undermine John Paul II, who was threatening the Polish authorities. In August a Turkish anti-Christian liberation movement made itself known. It was later learnt after the Iron Curtain collapsed, from the testimony of Markus Wolf's right-hand man, that these claims came from the Stasi, as part of the "Papst operation", which was intended to put suspicion on Turkey and divert attention away from the Bulgarian secret services. All that was nothing more than a

smokescreen, according to the judges in charge of the case, who, after investigating the matter for seven years, declared that it was a political-terrorist affair, totally fabricated to conceal the real motive behind Emanuela's disappearance.

In February 1994, Judge Adele Rando took down the scathing testimony of Vincenzo Parisi, assistant director of the Italian secret services: "We recognised that there was constant caginess on the part of the Holy See which effectively prevented any thorough investigation […] There wasn't the slightest willingness to help with the progress of the case […] I think that the investigations were tainted by the reluctance of the Italian State and the Holy See. The whole sequence of events in the case was characterised by attempts at disinformation with the clear objective of putting the investigators off their tracks and sowing doubt in their minds."[17] In other words, according to this expert, the Bulgarians were not the only ones out to confuse matters.

A rather disgraceful hypothesis was put forward in 1993 by Cardinal Silvio Oddi, suggesting that the man in the green BMW was known to the Vatican. Again in 1993, an anonymous letter from the Vatican sent to Judge Rando claimed that Emanuela spent the night she disappeared with a well-known prelate who drove her back to Rome the next day, whereafter she fled for fear of having to face her family. In this scenario Emanuela died accidentally during a night of forced sex with a perverted prelate, who then made the body disappear. We are here plunging into a fairly tacky B-rated story, which was not supported by facts. In the Vatican, the overall feeling was that those responsible for the kidnapping belonged to organised crime and that the proposal to swap Agça was a pretext to extort considerable sums of money in return for the girl, and to send the investigators on the wrong tracks.[18]

In 2005, during a TV programme devoted to the affair, *Chi l'a visto*, an anonymous caller stated, "Do you want to solve the Orlandi affair? If so, go and take a look into the tomb of De Pedis." Enrico "Renatino" De Pedis was one of the leaders of the Mafia Magliana gang, who was shot dead in Rome in February 1990. Strangely enough, he was buried in the crypt of the Sant'Apollinare Church, an honour generally reserved for important people in the Church. A former associate of De Pedis testified in an interview with the *Fatto Quotidiano*[19] that Emanuela Orlandi's kidnapping had been

committed by the Magliana gang for financial reasons. When the Ambrosiano Bank crashed, the gang lost $200 million, which it had entrusted to the bank for laundering via the IOR. “The money had disappeared and we had the choice between dropping a cardinal’s body by the side of the road or attacking someone close to the Pope. We chose the second option.”

Without implicating any particular prelate, the Italian investigators thought the Mafia lead was the only plausible one.[20] A bizarre real estate deal reinforced their suspicions. In 1983, an organisation which depended on the Vatican, the Opera Francesco Saverio Oddasso, sold a sumptuous villa surrounded by some 24 000 square metres of gardens in the centre of Rome to the Magliana’s treasurer, Enrico Nicoletti, for a ridiculous sum, a fraction of its real worth.[21] Was this sale carried out on the orders of Cardinal Ugo Poletti, the head of the Rome diocese, as a way of discreetly compensating for the losses the Mafia gang had made, and buying peace? In any case, this was the belief of the examining magistrate. A final detail: it was also Poletti who gave the order to bury De Pedis in the Sant’Apollinare crypt.

20

DEATH OF A BANKER

In hindsight, 1981 really was an *annus horribilis* for Paul Marcinkus. The run of bad luck started on 5 February, when the examining magistrates of Milan ordered the arrest of his assistant at the head of the IOR, Luigi Mennini. Mennini had been a director representing the IOR in Sindona's Banca Unione, which was enough to accuse him of complicity in foreign currency trafficking. The arrest was a shock for the Vatican. Marcinkus pleaded the cause of his colleague with the Pope. It was no doubt a political operation by the centre-left coalition in power at the time, a retaliatory measure for the support the Vatican had given the Christian Democrats for decades.

On 17 March, the judges ordered the villa belonging to Licio Gello to be searched. An attaché case was discovered in a safe; it contained the files of 956 candidates for membership of the P2 lodge, as well as bank statements confirming that money had been transferred to politicians, judges and important industrialists, and correspondence with Argentine military leaders with a view to buying weapons. The police also discovered a hideaway concealing compromising photos of several well-known Italians. It was not certain that Gelli had used them, but it was probable that he kept them "just in case". One of photos caught the investigators' attention. The Pope was to be seen, in his summer residence at Castel Gandolfo, sunbathing near his swimming pool, naked.

Gelli hadn’t had time to put his records away safely. But he had had the time to get away, first to Switzerland, then to Uruguay. And his assistant Umberto Ortolani had flown to Brazil. The P2 lodge was now in the spotlight. The list of all its members was a veritable directory of society—politicians, judges, the army, the media and businessmen.

The assassination attempt on the Pope took place on 13 May 1981. Marcinkus depended on his surviving. If Wojtyła died, everything would come to an end for him. As if that wasn’t enough, Calvi was arrested on 20 May and charged (with six other directors of the Centrale Finanziaria) for having illegally exported 50 million lire via an offshore network. He claimed that he had acted on behalf of the IOR, proof of which was held by the Swiss subsidiary of the Banco Ambrosiano, the Banca del Gottardo. But Swiss banking regulations forbade disclosing them without the agreement of all parties concerned. From his prison, Calvi asked his wife to ask for Marcinkus’s help, but to no effect. Calvi was persuaded to recruit as a “special consultant” Francesco Pazienza. Calvi’s son sometimes had the impression that Pazienza was defending Marcinkus’s interests more than his father’s. When Carlo Calvi contacted Marcinkus by fax from Nassau with a few copies from his father’s documents, the IOR head sent Pazienza to the island to order him to stop all this manoeuvring.

In New York, Pazienza introduced Carlo to Archbishop Giovanni Chelli, the head of the Vatican’s diplomatic mission to the United Nations, and presented him as a possible successor to Marcinkus. At this meeting were present Father Lorenzo Zorza, Chelli’s personal assistant, a not very desirable New York businessman, and a member of the Italian intelligence services.

Calvi was set free, while awaiting his trial, and remained at the head of his bank. It was true that foreign exchange trafficking was considered a national sport in Italy.

Marcinkus might now have been expected to keep his distance, but no. If he cut his ties, the group risked collapsing, causing the loss of the loan of $180 million. In later testimony, Marcinkus confirmed that it was only in the summer of 1981 that he discovered that the Cisalpine Bank was the owner of offshore companies which carried a debt of almost a billion dollars. This was a bit much for somebody who was one of the bank’s

directors. Marcinkus didn't want to acknowledge that from the outset the principal role of the IOR had been to enable Calvi to build up a network of foreign companies which technically did not belong to the Italian Ambrosiano Bank. This was tantamount to accusing oneself of not warning the other directors of these very serious facts.

On 26 August, the IOR head therefore agreed to give Calvi "letters of intent" so he could reassure his partners that the IOR was present behind the Ambrosiano. In these letters, he indicated that the Vatican bank controlled the offshore companies of the Ambrosiano group directly or indirectly and was "aware" of its debt towards the Ambrosiano. The total amount of the debts, which didn't appear on the document, was of the order of a billion dollars. But at the same time, Calvi had to furnish Marcinkus with a secret letter in which he discharged the IOR from all obligations to reimburse anything. Put plainly, Marcinkus agreed to supply a false document. It was the beginning of a scandal that was unique in the Church's history.

According to what Sindona confided to Nick Tosches, Calvi apparently agreed to pay $20 million for these letters: "Calvi—no one knows this but it is true—paid the Vatican, through Marcinkus, $20 million for those two letters of comfort.

"He knew that Marcinkus would be lured by that $20 million, which he could then offer up to the Pope as proof of his money-making abilities. But the fact that Calvi was even willing, let alone eager, to pay $20 million for those letters, which he knew to be meaningless, offers some indication of the worth of the Vatican's prestige. Now, to a certain degree, that prestige has been lost."[1]

Marcinkus had made a gesture, but he warned Calvi that it was the last. The letters of intent gave Calvi only a degree of respite; they didn't solve his financial problems.

So in this unique context, in September 1981, experienced Vatican watchers were simply astonished when the Pope appointed Marcinkus pro-president of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, i.e. the administrator of the city with the rank of archbishop. The message that these bigger responsibilities sent to the rest of the world was that the Pope had no intention of ridding himself of his great treasurer. And in March 1982, Marcinkus declared in public his support for Calvi in an interview in the weekly news magazine *Panorama*. "Calvi deserves our trust," he said,

explaining that the Vatican had no intention of selling its shares in the Ambrosiano.

To save his group, Calvi needed a new shareholder: he considered having the Turin financier Carlo De Benedetti enter the company, his reputation being a good one. Agreement was reached at the end of 1981, but it was clear right from the start that it wouldn't work. Calvi didn't let De Benedetti have access to any sensitive information. In January 1982, the association ended.

The CONSOB, the regulator of the Italian securities market appointed after Sindona's bankruptcy, wanted to force Calvi to publish detailed information on his bank by having it quoted on the Milan Stock Exchange. Calvi played for time. He was increasingly nervous, surrounding himself with bodyguards and carrying a weapon all the time. On 27 April, one of his assistants was shot twice in the centre of Milan. The attackers fled on a motorbike, but one of the bank guards shot at the fleeing men, hitting one and mortally wounding him. The inquest established a few months later that Calvi had paid the killer.

Calvi was desperate and was being strangled financially. He had to pay back more than $120 million worth of loans to the IOR in May and only obtained one month's breather from Marcinkus. In an interview with *L'Espresso* in 1986, Pazienza explained away the crash of the Ambrosiano by citing the way operations increased rapidly in the three final years. "The Ambrosiano was supposed to represent the modern, secular arm of the Church throughout the world. The new temporal power was seen as penetrating and controlling finance and the media in order to counter Marxist influences, which were becoming dominant in Italy."

As the deadline approached, Calvi hung on to Pazienza like a lifebuoy. The latter introduced him to Flavio Carboni, a Sardinian real estate businessman. Like Pazienza, Carboni had contacts both with the Vatican and with Mafia groups. It was said he was close to the Roman Magliana gang, the Mafia from the south of Rome which specialised in hold-ups, kidnappings, extortion and drug dealing. He had contacts with the secret services and far-right terrorist groups. Carboni led the life of a playboy, though he was always short of money, with a wife, two mistresses, a yacht and a private jet.

Carboni recorded his conversations with Calvi. On one of the cassettes found by the police, he said, "I've known Ortolani [no. 2 of the P2 lodge]

since 1955."[2] He also knew Mgr Hilary Franco and Cardinal Pietro Palazzini, both close to Opus Dei. According to Carboni, Franco was in touch with the Reagan administration. Apparently he'd carried out a secret mediation mission for the Pope during the Falklands War. Mgr Franco was called as a witness in the trial for the murder of Calvi because a piece of paper with his name and two telephone numbers was found on the corpse. In the last weeks before his death, Calvi had had several telephone conversations, with Carboni as well.

For his part, Calvi said to his wife and his children that he was working on a rescue plan with Franco in which Opus Dei was participating. In exchange Opus Dei would control the major strategic directions that the bank would take and would obtain certain privileges from the Pope. According to the testimony of Carboni later before the Italian courts, Mgr Franco had informed him that Opus Dei agreed to grant a loan to the Ambrosiano so that it could honour its reimbursement of $200 million to the IOR. However, this plan met with resistance from within the Vatican. Officially the IOR did not react.

Behind the scenes, it was quite another matter. One of the IOR treasurers based in Switzerland, the business lawyer Arthur Wiederkehr, operated discreetly via the Limmat Foundation, which was set up in 1972. This foundation collected donations, which were invested in various businesses. Despite his Nazi acquaintances, Wiederkehr was cleared in 1943 by the Swiss Bar's disciplinary committee and his business had prospered after the war. In the 1980s he sat on the boards of dozens of companies. He was regarded as the "cornerstone" between Opus Dei, the Ambrosiano and the Rumasa (a group of Spanish companies which were directed by a member of Opus Dei and whose bankruptcy had caused a scandal). It was he who advised the Limmat Foundation, and who was also charged with exporting Rumasa capital via front companies. And he owned shares in Ambrosiano, personally and on behalf of Opus Dei. Wiederkehr controlled several companies in Panama, which acquired more than 2 million shares in Ambrosiano. What we can conclude is that, despite later denials, Opus Dei had started to position itself vis-à-vis Ambrosiano, but too little and too late to save Sindona.

In the last months of his life, Calvi became more and more nervous and concerned for the safety of his nearest and dearest. In May he persuaded his wife to leave for the United States. His daughter wanted to stay to take her

exams at the University of Milan. On 20 May 1982, Marcinkus refused to grant Calvi an audience and asked his assistant, Luigi Mennini, to see him.

As he was running out of options, Calvi wrote to John Paul II on 5 June 1982. He explained that he had been a good warrior in the anti-communist struggle throughout the world.

> At the specific request of your authorized representatives, I have provided financing for many countries and politico-religious organizations in the East as in the West. It was I who, at the request of the Vatican authorities, co-ordinated throughout South and Central America the creation of numerous banking entities with the aim, in addition to everything else, of containing the penetration and extension of Marxist ideologies.
>
> After all of this, I am the one who has been betrayed and abandoned by those same authorities to whom I always paid maximum respect and obedience.[3]

His fall triggered “an unimaginable catastrophe in which the Church suffered the gravest harm”.[4] Calvi asked for a meeting with the Pope to hand over “some important documents in his possession”. There was no direct reply. Calvi saw Marcinkus a few days later. The meeting was icy. The banker tried again to give his letter to the Pope via Carboni, who handed it to a Czech bishop (probably Hnilica).

At the end of May 1982, in a letter to the board, the Bank of Italy demanded answers to questions about the loans of $1.4 billion issued by the South American subsidiaries of the Ambrosiano. Calvi was shown a copy of an arrest warrant in his name, a fake. According to a source in the Italian secret services, it was Gelli who had the idea of getting him to quit Italy. Calvi couldn’t be allowed to fall into the hands of the Italian magistrates. On 11 June, Calvi vanished. The price of Ambrosiano shares started a hellish decline. On 14 June, Bank of Italy inspectors turned up at the bank and demanded to see the account books. Marcinkus decided it was the right moment to resign from the board of the Banco Ambrosiano Overseas. A few days later, the Milanese bank defaulted on its 250 million dollar reimbursement to the IOR. Panic engulfed the Vatican. Casaroli shut himself up several times with Marcinkus in his office for talks that rumours from the Curia described as “tense”. For the Bank of Italy it was now clear that the Ambrosiano’s biggest debtor was the IOR. With no help from the Vatican, the directors of the Ambrosiano had no choice but to call in the Bank of Italy to take control.

* * *

At about 7.30 a.m. on 18 June 1982, a young messenger from the London *Daily Express* was crossing Blackfriars Bridge over the Thames at the City, on his way to work. Instinctively, he looked down at the scaffolding below him. Suddenly he froze. He saw a body there, hanging by its neck from a piece of orange rope. The boy rushed to his office and alerted the police. When the policemen recovered the body, they noticed bricks stuffed into the pockets of his suit, as well as a thick bundle of foreign currency notes, valued at about $15 000. In the inside pocket was a passport in the name of Gian Roberto Calvini. It didn't take long to identify the man as Roberto Calvi, the head of the Ambrosiano of Milan, who had vanished from Rome a week earlier. The British judges closed the case without further ado, believing it was a suicide. Jeremy Paxman, a BBC reporter, remarked ironically: "To believe that [Calvi] committed suicide, we must accept that he travelled over four miles to Blackfriars Bridge and once there discovered scaffolding which was not visible from the road. We have to accept, too, that he happened to find several lumps of brick which he then put down his trousers and in his pockets. We have to believe that he happened to find some convenient rope. And all the time, back in the flat, he had enough sleeping pills to kill himself easily and painlessly."[5]

On 2 July, the provisional administrators of the Ambrosiano appointed by the Bank of Italy visited the directors of the IOR. They estimated that the Vatican owed the Ambrosiano $1.275 billion. Those responsible in the IOR responded by putting the Calvi "counter-letter" under their noses, before throwing their visitors out. John Paul II set up a commission of fifteen cardinals to study the Vatican's finances and take measures to avoid further scandals. Marcinkus said nothing of these letters before the commission. Several members were furious when they were made public.

Settlements out of court

The administrators appointed by the Bank of Italy chose to bail out the Ambrosiano of Milan and honour the debts of the parent company, but they refused to honour the debts of the foreign subsidiaries. They believed that it was up to the Vatican to do so. On 9 August, therefore, the Nuovo Banco Ambrosiano was established on the basis of the sound assets. The foreign

subsidiaries had loaned $1.2 billion to offshore companies created by Calvi. A large part of this money had been used to buy back Ambrosiano shares to support the share price. But this barely represented more than half the total, or $600 million. It is probable that the missing money had been used for secret operations organised by the Vatican (we'll come back to this later).

Officially the IOR held only 1.6% of Ambrosiano and consequently reckoned that it didn't owe anything. But, according to one of the directors, Giacomo Botta, in the Ambrosiano bankruptcy trial, in reality it held 20% to 30% of the bank via several offshore companies, which made it by far the biggest shareholder. Botta remarked on the lightning career of Alessandro Mennini, the son of Luigi Mennini, Marcinkus's right-hand man, in the Ambrosiano. Although he had no experience, the young man was promoted to the position of assistant manager. Botta also reported that when he took over the management of the Managua subsidiary, Calvi explained to him that the IOR controlled the group and that most of the loans issued by his branch were for companies belonging to the Vatican.

In October, the results of the investigation carried out by the CONSOB were published in the press. It was learnt that the IOR owned a Luxembourg entity, Manic, which controlled six of the dummy companies that owed money to the South American subsidiaries of the Ambrosiano. The guarantees on these loans included 10% of the Ambrosiano shares. It was now recognised that while the Vatican could have held part of the ghost companies, it did not control them and was not therefore accountable for the debts. Finally, the commission of inquiry's report appointed by Casaroli admitted the following month that the Vatican did control several of these companies. Nonetheless, the Vatican experts still maintained that the IOR became the owner of these companies without realising it, as a result of one of Calvi's moves.

After his father's death, Carlo Calvi continued to sort through the records hidden in a trunk in the Bahamas. He even claimed that the IOR was the real boss of the Ambrosiano: it held a block of 16% of the shares through the ghost companies. According to him, Marcinkus was under a lot of pressure from the Pope to find still further money and he started pumping more and more funds from the system. In February and March 1983, the London *Sunday Times* published other documents showing that Marcinkus had given instructions in the 1970s for the creation of certain ghost companies and that he subsequently lied by claiming he knew nothing about

the extent of their debt. In private, the Vatican agreed to negotiate with the Italian government. At Christmas 1982, a new commission of inquiry was appointed, this time Italian–Vatican. There wasn't really any choice: in the event of judicial proceedings before the Luxembourg courts, the IOR risked having its assets seized everywhere in the European Community.

At Christmas 1984, the Pope and Casaroli agreed to pay around $250 million (in the end it was $244 million). A new concordat was being negotiated with the Italian government and it would not come about without the matter being settled. To pay, the Vatican sold its shares in various companies, but it also gave up 51% of its shares in the Banco di Roma per la Svizzera for $100 million. The IOR lost a total of $510 million.

The Vatican refused to hand over Marcinkus to the Italian courts. He was then confined to the Vatican city-state. This time the scandal prevented him from becoming a cardinal. His secretary, the discreet De Bonis, came out better. He was promoted to archbishop.

Deprived of his outings to luxurious Roman golf courses, Marcinkus had to resign himself to converting a piece of papal garden into a putting green, so that he wouldn't lose his touch. However, the highest Italian courts ended up by deciding that they didn't have the authority to judge the directors of the IOR, which depended on the Vatican alone. Marcinkus would be able to return to the Roman golf courses.

The Luxembourg liquidator of the Banco Ambrosiano Holding, Paul Mousel, testified during the Italian trial in the matter of Calvi's murder in 2006 that the IOR held at least 20% of it. "The mechanism set up by the Ambrosiano with the connivance of the IOR is typical of money laundering. [But] I can't prove it was done."[6] He couldn't exclude the fact that the money had been used for Vatican operations. One possibility was that the IOR wanted to finance activities without them becoming public and that it utilised the Calvi network to do this.

According to Mousel, the flow of "untraceable" money represented one half of the "hole" left by the bankruptcy. Several repentant mafiosi also confirmed that Calvi and Marcinkus were implicated in a money-laundering circuit used by the Cosa Nostra, after Sindona went bankrupt. One of them was the former godfather Antonio Giuffrè, a close friend of Bernardo Provenzano, who had fallen in 2002. During the same trial for the Calvi murder, he told a worrying tale. "Pippo Calò, the mafia's treasurer, was put

in contact with Roberto Calvi by Michele Sindona, Giuffrè told the court. When Sindona's financial and judicial problems, in Italy and the US, reduced his influence as a money launderer, the baton was passed on to Calvi in the second half of the 1970s, Giuffrè said. 'It's Sindona who promotes Calvi within Cosa Nostra. A triangular relationship develops. On one side you have Cosa Nostra, on another side a certain kind of freemasonry, and on another side we find Cardinal[7] [*sic*] Marcinkus … Soon Calvi finds himself in the midst of an enormous money flow … It's fairly well known within Cosa Nostra circles, in a wider context that touches the United States as well, that Cardinal Marcinkus had both direct and indirect contacts with Cosa Nostra,' Giuffrè said. "I know that Cardinal Marcinkus played an important role, as well as Cosa Nostra and a certain type of freemasonry. I'm referring in particular to P2. The most important person in that world at that time was Licio Gelli.'"

Giuffrè added that Calvi's success with the Italian bank had had a price: he'd been obliged to finance the Christian Democrats and the Socialists. Later during his testimony, Giuffrè was asked if the Cosa Nostra had lost any money in the Banco Ambrosiano failure. "A part of what Cosa Nostra had invested was never recovered," he said.

The story had a good ending. The journalist Rupert Cornwell related:

> In the afternoon of Friday, 17 February 1984, a group of men in dark suits left the Hotel des Bergues in Geneva. They were visibly satisfied with their meetings. Less than 24 hours later and 900 km further south in a lovely Renaissance home located on one of the hills surrounding Rome, Bettino Craxi—the first socialist to be prime minister of modern Italy—sat next to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, the Vatican Secretary of State, for a solemn ceremony. On that day both men signed a new concordat regulating the relations between the two states, 55 years after the agreement signed in 1929 between Mussolini and Pope Pius XI.

Despite their different nature, the two events were closely linked.

> The meeting in Geneva was the conclusion of a quest begun eighteen months earlier to find an agreement between the Vatican, the Italian authorities and 120 creditor banks to settle the debts left by the Banco Ambrosiano. And for months it was felt that without such an agreement, the new concordat which they had been negotiating for almost ten years could not be ratified.[8]

But who killed Calvi?

On Friday, 11 June, Calvi disappeared. He first took a domestic flight to Trieste. There he was taken in charge by a friend of Carboni, who took him to Yugoslavia in a speedboat, then by car to Austria. In Vienna on Tuesday the 14th, Calvi met Leopold Ledl, a character in the "Vatican Connection" scandal, which was a case of false shares uncovered by the FBI. Calvi was looking for compromising information about Marcinkus. Ledl had records of the financial transactions carried out by Marcinkus but refused to entrust them to him. On Monday, 14 June, Calvi and his bodyguard, Vittor, went to Bregenz, on the banks of Lake Constance, not far from the Swiss border. But Carboni persuaded him to give up the idea of going to Switzerland, and instead proceed to England. On Tuesday, 15 June, Calvi left Innsbruck on a private flight to London, organised by the businessman Hans Kunz, who had made a fortune in the oil trade. It was Kunz who booked the flat for Calvi in Chelsea Cloisters as well as a flight for himself to London on the evening of the death of Calvi, which may have allowed him to recover some of his personal effects; then a flight to Edinburgh on 20 June to pick up Carboni. Kunz was an old acquaintance of Licio Gelli.

This last day is crucial to understanding what is likely to have happened. Calvi dined in a restaurant with three or four people. Apart from Carboni, certain investigators think that Umberto Ortolani or Licio Gelli or both were present in London that evening.

Carboni's moves before and after the death of Calvi are intriguing. In the space of six days, he went from Klagenfurt to Zurich, then to Bregenz, Amsterdam and finally London (where he slept in three different places). After the death of Calvi, he vanished from the radar. Telephone data obtained from the hotels where Carboni stayed showed that he had been in daily contact with Mgr Hilary Franco, the Roman lawyer Alfredo Vitalone, and the switchboard of the Vatican.

During the trial on the death of Calvi, the repentant godfather Antonio Giuffrè said: "From the moment when Calvi's death was decreed, as always happens, someone plays the role of *compare* (friend) to Calvi. That is the person who collects Calvi and delivers him into the hands of those who are will kill him. One of these people was Carboni […] First he gains Calvi's confidence and then he delivers him to those who will strangle him … Flavio Carboni is the person who guided Calvi on this last stretch of the

road."[9] A bit of rope was found in Carboni's luggage identical to that used by Calvi to "hang himself".

An ex-banker, Jürg Heer, provided evidence to the *Wall Street Journal*.[10] As a credit manager with Rothschild Bank AG of Zurich for twenty years, he explained that the bank took part in illegally exporting foreign currency from Italy for its rich customers. He thus received a telephone call from one of Licio Gelli's colleagues asking him to deliver a briefcase full of cash (he estimated the sum at $5 million) to men whom the person he was talking to afterwards described as "Calvi's killers". There were a lot of sources that accused Gelli of having ordered the murder of Calvi.

Other *pentiti* from the Mafia made specific accusations. Enrico Madonna claimed that Vincenzo Casillo (one of the lieutenants of the Camorra boss, Raffaele Cutolo, at the time in prison) confided in him that he had taken part in the murder of Calvi. Madonna thought he understood that his murder was sought by "the secret services and people connected with the Ambrosiano like Pazienza".[11] Casillo is no longer alive to confirm this. He was killed by a bomb seven months after Calvi's death. His girlfriend was executed just afterwards.

Another *pentito*, Francesco Marino Mannoia, singled out two men, Vincenzo Casillo and Francesco Di Carlo, as close to the "godfather of godfathers", Toto Riina. Mannoia testified that Di Carlo had acted upon the orders of Pippo Calò to punish Calvi for having lost P2's and Cosa Nostra's money. An investigation carried out by the Kroll Investigation Company for the Calvi family showed that Di Carlo had received a transfer of $100 000 to his account at Barclays Bank only four days before Calvi's death.

In Italy, the belief that Calvi was murdered has been confirmed by the Italian courts. In a court case between the Calvi family and Generali Insurance (who refused to pay Roberto's life assurance, as it did not cover suicide), the court found that it was probably murder. In 2005–6 there was a trial of five people accused of complicity in this murder, among them Pippo Calò, Flavio Carboni and Silvano Vittor. The examining magistrates believed that the intention behind the murder was to punish Calvi for having squandered Cosa Nostra's funds and prevent any revelation being made as to his money-laundering activities in the Ambrosiano. Calvi knew

too much and could have blackmailed his former associates in politics, the P2 and the Vatican.

The five accused were acquitted in June 2007 because of insufficient proof. But the court did establish several facts. Calvi had been assassinated. He was drugged and then taken in a boat to Blackfriars Bridge, where he was hanged from the scaffolding. The court found that it was credible that Calvi and Marcinkus had operated a money-laundering business for Cosa Nostra. The British secret services, if they had been informed of what was going on, might have turned a blind eye since Calvi had been imprudent enough to finance the purchase of weapons by Argentina for use against the UK during the Falklands War. The Italian services were perfectly well informed of what Pazienza and Carboni were up to. They failed to intervene so as to avoid Calvi ruining the Italian political class or even the Vatican.

The general acquittal was confirmed by the appeal court in Rome in 2010. In their verdict, the judges endorsed the idea that "Cosa Nostra had used the IOR and the Banco Ambrosiano for massive money-laundering operations".[12] The Court of Final Appeal upheld this judgment in November 2011.

So, in the end, who gave the order to kill Calvi? An Italian politician, a member of the parliamentary commission of inquiry into P2, gave this analysis to the journalist Larry Gurwin: "One possibility is the Mafia—some people say that the underworld tried to acquire the money and power Calvi had; others say that Calvi had done what in Mafia language is called a *sgarbo*—an offence in regard to the organisation—for which he had to be punished. Some people believe that Calvi was ready to reveal sensitive information about the Church's political activities in Poland and in Latin America, and he met opposition within the Vatican. Others believe that enemies of the Church wanted to give a signal to the Vatican. This would connect the elimination of Calvi with the attempt to assassinate the Pope. Some believe that Calvi was eliminated to expose the relationship between Ambrosiano and its boss and the Vatican—in order to hurt the Vatican."[13]

21

POLISH CRUSADE

After the attack in Saint Peter's Square, John Paul II returned to the Vatican more speedily than his doctors would have wanted. But how could you make him do anything he didn't want to do? The Pope now doubled his efforts in respect of the Polish question: whereas up till now things had been handled discreetly, he began to act more aggressively than ever. It was quite possible that during the weeks following his return, he thought that the Eastern bloc secret services had wanted to kill him and this swelled his anti-communist fervour. We know that part of his entourage believed this whole-heartedly, like Father Hnilica. During the following months, however, the Secretariat of State received reports from the American, Turkish, Italian, French and German secret services. To anyone without preconceived notions who read them, it was not at all obvious who was responsible. Wojtyła said later that he did not believe in the Bulgarian plot. Others close to him, like the anti-communist Giulio Andreotti, thought that they'd have to look elsewhere. Sure, but where?

If our theory of the Mafia's involvement in the attack, maybe in association with the P2 lodge, is correct, it is certain that the Pontiff would have been made aware of the reasons for this warning. On this premise, the kidnapping of Emanuela Orlandi would correspond to a second warning, which had no more effect than the first. Even for the Cosa Nostra, it was difficult to get a pope, who felt invested with a divine mission and protected

by the Virgin Mary, to deviate from the course he had chosen. As for going as far as to kill him, this was easier said than done. Security around the Pope had been considerably strengthened. It was tantamount to a suicide mission. As for undertaking such an act in very Catholic Italy, even the all-powerful Mafia would have had to think twice before embarking on such a step.

Although 1981 marked a change in the Vatican's secret activities in Poland, it was not a direct consequence, or not primarily so, of the attack against the Pope. It was rather a reaction to the hardening of the Polish regime, constrained as it was by its Soviet big brother. The new prime minister, Jaruzelski, thought that imposing martial law upon Polish society in December was a lesser evil than risking a Soviet invasion. But this only acted as an incentive.

Martial law

The threat of a Soviet invasion, as reported by Colonel Kukliński to the CIA, had been hanging over the country since the end of 1980. It remained a virtual threat because the Red Army was busy in Afghanistan, and the global consequences in terms of public image for the USSR would have been catastrophic. The new authorities in Poland were very much encouraged to proclaim martial law. The KGB reported that the presence of Western secret services was intensifying in Poland. NATO secret services were, it said, trying to infiltrate Solidarity. No archive available today attests to this, even if several Western services like the French DGSE had set up contacts with the trade union. With no permanent post in Warsaw, the service infiltrated spies by various means at great risk: a team of three officers from Action Service, who crossed the border on foot from Czechoslovakia, was spotted when it reached a small town. The men were saved by a priest who hid them in his sacristy. After several trips, the service developed contacts in the country and forged ties with Solidarity, which had become an underground movement.[1] What the former director of the French secret services Pierre Marion forgot to reveal was that at least one agent of the DGSE, working in Moscow, took advantage of his holidays in Paris, Warsaw and Moscow to carry suitcases of banknotes into Poland.

But his work was interrupted when he “fell” into a honey trap in Moscow and had to be recalled to Paris.[2]

In June the situation became tense. A group of nine Polish generals who were more faithful to Moscow than to their own leaders proposed a plan to the KGB to get rid of Jaruzelski because he refused to impose martial law. Jaruzelski felt the situation was less alarming than did his Russian counterparts. The SB thought it had good control of the Polish Church and that it did not present the main danger. The new Primate, Józef Glemp, was less anti-Soviet than his predecessor, who had had the advantage of a real personality cult. In spite of his tough manner, Wałęsa was in fact rather moderate. As far as the Polish service was concerned, the real danger came from another leader of the movement, Zbigniew Bujak. He was thought to be more intelligent. The SB’s mission therefore was to discredit him.

The autumn’s events seemed to call into question the status quo. The first congress of Solidarity was held at Gdańsk in September. The trade unionists asked for a referendum on self-governance, and sent a message of friendship to the workers of the Eastern bloc countries who were campaigning for “free trade unions” and demanding “free elections”. Moscow at once demanded that Warsaw take radical steps. The only thing the Polish politburo could do was denounce the “programme of political opposition” adopted by Solidarity. The Polish First Secretary, Kania, resigned the following month under pressure and was replaced by Jaruzelski. Special army brigades took control of the country to prevent any riots and came down hard on the trade unions.

On 28 October, there was a one-hour general strike calling for an end to the repression against Solidarity activists. On 7 November, the Pope announced that he would be going to Poland again in August 1982 for the 600th anniversary of the founding of the sanctuary of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. The timing of his announcement raised the pressure.

Jaruzelski chose a Saturday at midnight, 12 December, to proclaim martial law: 80 000 soldiers were mobilised to arrest 6 000 Solidarity activists on that night. When Poles woke up on Sunday, they found tanks in the streets. At 6 a.m. Jaruzelski addressed the Poles on television in uniform. The country was now governed by a Military Council of National Salvation. A curfew was decreed until further notice; telephone lines were interrupted for a month; mail was censored, as were newspapers and books;

public assemblies except for religious services were forbidden. The borders were closed and foreign journalists expelled; the population was confined to their homes. The army now controlled all means of communication and the television. Jaruzelski thought he had no other choice. Unless there'd been an intervention from outside, his regime would have collapsed bit by bit under pressure from Solidarity. The leaders of the trade union were taken by surprise. They hadn't envisaged such a radical reaction.

Cardinal Glemp gave instructions to the Polish faithful in his Sunday homily not to resist. It was transmitted on the radio *ad nauseam*. This speech no doubt discouraged a number of Catholics who were getting ready to resist. Moreover, in the following weeks the Polish episcopate was to change its tune. Meanwhile, Glemp seemed to be willing to support martial law. He would no doubt have done otherwise had he been able to talk to the Pope. The Solidarity leaders who'd escaped arrest and were now living underground concluded that they now had to seek advice from the Vatican.

On his side, the Pope thought that Solidarity had to remain underground, resume its publications, and try to rally people's spirits with the help of the Church. The Pontiff undertook to send money secretly, a lot of it coming from several sources.

On 21 December 1981, shortly before midnight, the Pope met the Auxiliary Bishop of Warsaw, Mgr Bronislaw Dabrowski, in his private apartment. The latter had been able to meet Wałęsa in secret. He testified to his wish to resist. Likewise, the Polish episcopate had decided to refuse to negotiate for as long as martial law lasted. The Pope made up his mind to support Solidarity openly. On 24 December, following Polish tradition, he lit a candle in his window, which burned all Christmas Eve. This candle became the symbol of the Polish people's resistance. Ronald Reagan did likewise at the White House.

John Paul II and Jaruzelski wrote to each other. Jaruzelski pleaded that he had chosen the lesser of two evils. He knew he'd need the Church's cooperation to find a way out of the crisis.

The chief messenger between the two men was Bogdan Lewandowski, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations. He decided to go to Rome, then to Warsaw. He reached Rome on 15 December and dined with John Paul II and Dziwisz. He found the Pope very preoccupied. In Warsaw, Lewandowski was met by Jaruzelski on the 17th. The latter assured him that he wanted to avoid a bloodbath. Back in Rome, Lewandowski handed

over a recording of his talk with Jaruzelski (made with his agreement). On 18 December, John Paul II drew up an appeal to Jaruzelski and gave a copy to Glemp and Wałęsa.

Jaruzelski answered on 5 January, via a personal emissary. He recognised that martial law had caused shock and disillusionment. In Warsaw, the Holy See had a permanent mission with the Polish government, run by Archbishop Luigi Poggi. The Pope would use him to pass messages on to Jaruzelski because he was wary of Glemp.

There was constant dialogue between the two men in 1982. Jaruzelski could not do other than accept in principle a second visit by John Paul II, which was arranged for June. This caused great anxiety among the Polish secret services, which hung on to vain hopes concerning the Pope's health: an SB report claimed he had leukaemia while its colleagues in the Hungarian HVA thought it more likely cancer of the spine.

Father Jozef Kowalczyk played the role of underground liaison between Solidarity and the Vatican. Through the good offices of Father Jan Sikorski, the chaplain of Białołęka prison near Warsaw, talks started with the imprisoned leaders of Solidarity. Other chaplains did likewise in other prisons. These contacts enabled the Pope to obtain a reliable indication of the determination the imprisoned trade union leaders possessed.

This was even more of a reason for increasing material support for Solidarity's clandestine network. One of the men charged with transporting the goods overland was Father Gianni Danzi. This Swiss parish priest, a chain-smoker with a beard, didn't look at all like a secret agent. As a student, Danzi joined the Communion and Liberation movement in 1954. In the 1970s, he became friendly with Polish Catholic intellectuals. He organised pilgrimages for young people in Poland, often meeting Wojtyła. This was why he suggested to Mgr Dziwisz that he transport trucks of supplies to Poland. The aim of the first convoy was more to gather information on the spot than to bring food. Danzi noted that Poland's real border was with Czechoslovakia. He and his truck were searched high and low for hours. Once in Poland, he found a country all closed down, its roads obstructed with military barriers everywhere. He was warmly welcomed and took advantage of his work of distribution to move around and take photos discreetly. He was struck by the almost empty shops, the deplorable state of the hospitals, and so on: basically all the things one didn't see from the West. Danzi reported to Dziwisz on his return, and within Communion

and Liberation he set up a more industrial organisation with funds that seemed to come from various donors in Italy and in Europe.

A secretary of Cardinal König in Vienna started a similar collection and road transport operation for Poland. Soon trucks arrived in Warsaw from all Western European countries, with food, medicine and clothes. One day, a truck arrived from France, on behalf of the Pope. When they opened the cartons of food, the volunteers discovered typewriters. From that moment on, supplies of reprographic equipment never stopped. A clandestine Solidarity team was formed to use it. Apartments were rented to install the equipment and put it to use.

The equipment considered too compromising to be stored in a church was hidden in the woods. The priests and nuns were in the know, as was the rector of Saint Martin's Church, Father Dembrowski. The trucks from France were sent by Father Eugène Platar, of the Caritas organisation. The French support committee for Solidarity was an enormous success. In Saint Martin's Church, a clandestine network of priests and nuns organised material help for the members of the underground Solidarity. In Gdańsk, Saint Brigitte's Church was used as a hub for the organisation. Father Henryk Jankowski, one of Wałęsa's friends, said Masses for the workers from as early as the 1980 strikes. He encouraged secret meetings in his church and hid equipment.

Besides this material aspect, the Pope's support for the Poles galvanised them and gave them faith in their struggle, as no other pope could have done. Any visitor from Poland was automatically summoned by Dziwisz to eat at the Pope's table and answer a barrage of questions on the situation, until late into the night. Prelates moving regularly between Poland and Rome by car were made to do their bit. Mgr Fidelius, deputy to the Cardinal of Cracow, reported that Dziwisz asked him every time to take money, equipment, a bit of everything. Cash often arrived in dollars, which were easier to exchange on the black market. When he received a trusted visitor who'd come from Warsaw, at the end of the meeting Dziwisz would draw a bundle of banknotes from a safe which he slipped into an envelope before handing it to the visitor with instructions as to who was to receive it.

In the spring of 1982 Radio Solidarity was launched; it was a real challenge to the regime with its scattered transmitters and proof that Solidarity was still active and had not been crushed by the regime. From early May on, the inhabitants of Warsaw were able to listen to a call for a

general strike. The radio broadcast was transmitted on shortwave frequencies from many different places, which were changed regularly. Some of the radio equipment supplied to Solidarity enabled them to connect to the police frequencies and discover where and when the police were getting ready to intervene.

Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi have argued that Radio Solidarity was supported by the CIA,[3] but evidence from former people in authority contradict this theory.[4] Radio Free Europe brought another encouraging voice to the Poles. It broadcast in particular readings from the memoirs of Cardinal Wyszyński.

The Rome–Washington axis

Ronald Reagan was furious when martial law was introduced in Poland, for which he held the Soviets responsible. He immediately decided to impose economic sanctions against Poland. He gave instructions to the CIA boss, William Casey, and to Vernon Walters to send the Pope a mass of information from the American services on Poland, which was soon supplemented by files on the countries that John Paul II was going to visit. The Pope found himself almost as well informed as the president of the United States.

From the spring of 1981 until 1987, the Pope received no less than fifteen visits from the Casey–Walters duo. Walters was a Catholic of the old school. Sturdily built, talkative, he had a gift for languages and impressed many people he met, even if some of them found him a bit hollow. He was the interpreter for several presidents, from Roosevelt to Eisenhower and Vice-President Nixon, who appointed him assistant director of the CIA. Reagan made him his ambassador extraordinary, the man for the most confidential missions.

There are several accounts of his first meeting with John Paul II. Mgr Emery Kabongo, one of the Pope’s assistants, reported that there was no interpreter. General Walters asked him in which language he wanted to express himself. The Pope replied that he preferred the discussion to be in Italian. Walters started by passing on sincere greetings from President Reagan. The Pope returned the compliment. Then they got down to business. Walters took out satellite photos from his briefcase; their clarity

amazed the Pontiff. Walters talked for more than an hour about the CIA's understanding of Soviet intentions. Afterwards the Pope thanked him.

In an unpublished text, Walters gave other details. On that day he was accompanied by a young Navy lieutenant who was holding a briefcase of satellite photographs of Russian armed forces in the Ukraine. The lieutenant had distinct honour of having his cheeks pinched by the Pope, who whispered: "So young, so young."[5] During their next meeting, Walters told the Pope that the young lieutenant had resigned from the Navy to join a Dominican order. "See what you've done, Holy Father!" The Pope was delighted.

The American photos provided evidence of Warsaw Pact forces deploying in the direction of the Polish border. Poland itself had an army and a reserve force of some 800 000 men with three armoured and two airborne divisions. The CIA thought that they would probably fight against Warsaw Pact forces should there be an invasion. Walters explained: "If the Soviets invade, there will be war. It'll be a small war, a short war. But the Poles will fight. And nobody can foresee what the consequences will be …" The Pope showed no especial emotion. He was concerned that the Church in Poland should not be forced into brutal submission, as it had been already in the USSR. There was no going back.

The Reagan administration was aware that there was a convergence of interests between the Catholic Church and the United States in checking communist expansion. In a cable to the State Department, Walters mentioned that he always met the Pope alone. The briefings were generally arranged via the Washington nunciature by Archbishop Laghi and the US ambassador at the Vatican, William Wilson. Walters tried to shorten the meetings so that they lasted no more than 40 minutes, including time for the questions the Pope wanted to ask him."[6]

The Sovereign Pontiff's analyses of Poland as well as of Central America were listened to attentively by the people he spoke to. The Pope received the best-kept secret documents of American intelligence: satellite pictures, reports by the CIA on numerous subjects like Brezhnev's declining health, China, terrorism, the Middle East, and so on. In all, almost 75 files organised by theme and region were sent to the Pope: this was unprecedented. "One of the most important secret alliances of all time," Richard Allen was to say later. The Americans overestimated the

information supplied in return by John Paul II. On the Eastern bloc countries, they were perhaps right. But these exchanges above all showed two things: unlike previous popes, John Paul II didn't delegate the role of liaison with the American services to anybody else. He even exploited his charisma to impress the people he was speaking to and get the most from them. Exceptionally in the history of relations between the Vatican and the CIA, there was a feeling that the relationship was unequal, but in favour of the Pope. The latter received more information than he gave out to his charmed visitors. No other member of the Curia could have developed such a relationship.

The logical follow-up was a meeting between the Pope and Ronald Reagan. It took place on 7 June 1982 in the Vatican Library. The two heads of state were alone, whereas in another room Cardinal Casaroli and Archbishop Silvestrini met Alexander Haig, the Secretary of State, and William Clark, the National Security Advisor. The subject of the day was the invasion of Lebanon by Israel, which had just begun. But Reagan and the Pope focused their discussion on Poland. Both men had recently been victims of attacks and saw their survival as miraculous; they were men invested with a sacred mission: defeating communism with Christian ideals. Reagan stressed: "God spared us with a precise aim. That of freeing Poland." Both men brought up the possibility of the Soviet empire collapsing, which both thought was vulnerable. In London the next day, Reagan followed a similar line during an address at Westminster. He predicted that there would be "repeated outbursts against coercion" in the Eastern bloc countries. Carl Bernstein described this meeting of theirs as a turning point in history, the beginning of a "Holy Alliance" between the Vatican and the CIA, the driving force of a secret guerrilla war to speed up the disintegration of the communist empire.[7]

In the days following the introduction of martial law, a vast secret support operation for Solidarity was established with the help of the Vatican. This was decided during a meeting between Reagan, Vice-President Bush, William Casey, William Clark and a few others. The operation was not to appear anywhere in written orders. But, as we have seen, Solidarity didn't wait until February 1982 to set up clandestine printing presses and a radio station. Several participants, like Cardinal Krol or Archbishop Dabrowski (who had become the deputy to the Primate), formally denied any role. Similarly, numerous Solidarity leaders whom the

journalist Jonathan Kwitny interviewed contested this theory. And the leaders of the clandestine newspapers hadn't seen any CIA money either. The truth is that direct support for Solidarity in the first years came not from the CIA, but from the Vatican. It seems that former members of the Reagan administration wanted to appear in the eyes of history as having played major roles in the story of the collapse of communism in Poland. The problem was that they mentioned activities that were so secret that there were no written records about them, which was quite convenient. If there was anyone who had a major role in 1982, it was without doubt John Paul II, who, in addition to his main role, turned into a network head.

Father Adam Boniecki, editor-in-chief of the Polish edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, was one of the emissaries of the Pope to the underground Solidarity. He assured them of the Holy Father's support while at the same time encouraging them not to use force. The movement was assured it had the Pope's approval and understanding. The combined help of the Western services enabled Solidarity to reorganise and develop. As a vehicle for concrete action, the resistance movement paid special attention to clandestine newspapers and magazines. In August 1982 there were 250 underground publications.

Support for Solidarity became a European affair. Solidarity set up its European HQ in Brussels and received a contribution of $1.5 million from a group of French trade unions. Wanda Gawronska, a Pole who had lived for a long time in Rome and who had been introduced into high society, persuaded Italian political leaders to create a fund to help Poland. The minister of posts agreed to the request that parcels of essential goods could be sent free to Poland. For his part, Francesco Pazienza told Gerald Posner that at the request of Marcinkus he exchanged $3.5 million in cash for gold at the Crédit Suisse. "They were the only bank at the time offering 99.99 percent pure gold ingots in small sizes. The gold was put in a Lada Niva SUV, hidden in a custom-built double bottom as well as inside its doors. And a priest from Gdańsk drove it from Italy back to Poland."[8] Polish expatriates who had settled in France put Father Chojecki in touch with a Swedish sympathiser, an exporter of optical equipment. A ship's captain in Gdańsk was able to take merchandise through customs. Radio and printing equipment acquired in Paris was sent by this means. Solidarity could lean on the experience of Jerzy Giedroyc in matters of smuggling. This Polish émigré had established himself in a villa in the Paris region and printed

dissident Polish publications, in particular the magazine *Kultura*. The city was a rallying point for anti-Communist émigrés. As Giedroyc had become the Polish and Soviet services' bête noire, the DST (French interior security service) was obliged to keep an eye on him. Every day visitors brought him microfilms and manuscripts and left with printed material which would be taken to Poland. Anything and everything was used to transport them secretly: sports teams' bags, priests' luggage, and so on.[9]

Lastly, Opus Dei also gave its support. As soon as Wojtyła arrived on Saint Peter's throne, the order started building a clandestine network in Poland. The coordinator of Eastern European operations was Laureano López Rodó, Spain's ambassador to Vienna from 1972 to 1974. Austria was still the point of entry that was most often used by Opus Dei's "soldiers of Christ". The institution recruited Poles in exile who gravitated around the Institute of Human Sciences, created by two of Wojtyła's friends from Cracow. Vienna also sheltered the activities of Pro Fratribus, Father Hnilica's organisation, which was considered a rival. There were even reports that Father Dziwisz was one of its members, but this is impossible to verify.

Whatever the case, Opus Dei took part in financing Solidarity, first through the Ambrosiano network, then via Switzerland and Austria. It had a trump card within the Reagan administration: one of the representatives in the White House, Carl Anderson, was in fact a member of Opus Dei.

The empire strikes back

Because of the state of emergency in Poland, the secret services of the Eastern bloc were fully mobilised against Solidarity and the Pope's networks which aided it. They were temporarily mistaken about the CIA's support, which took time to materialise. Paranoid people are often right: it's just a question of timing.

In 1980, the KGB was already congratulating itself: "Our friends [in the Polish SB] have serious operational positions [i.e. agents] at their disposal in the Vatican, and these enable them to have direct access to the Pope and the Roman congregation. Apart from experienced agents, towards whom John Paul II is personally well disposed and who can obtain an audience with him at any time, our friends have agent assets among the leaders of

Catholic students who are in constant contact with Vatican circles and have possibilities in Radio Vatican and the Pope's secretariat."[10] In reality, the quality of these sources would be put to the test by the crisis.

At the beginning of 1981, an SB source revealed that a member of the Polish Ministry of Defence with access to the plans for martial law had supplied the CIA with the information; this meant that John Paul II's entourage knew about it too. Only a handful of Polish officers were suspected, and Kukliński was one of them. He sent an urgent message to the CIA, who decided to exfiltrate him together with his family. In all, Kukliński supplied 40 000 pages of confidential documents, most of them military: maps of preparations, plans for mobilisation, technical data of weapons, policy on the use of nuclear forces, and so on.

The Polish secret services recruited a good number of double agents from within Solidarity. When he arrived in the United States, Kukliński told the CIA that the trade union had been penetrated "from the beginning" and that the regime had a very good idea of what was going on.

The KGB team based in Warsaw advised its SB colleagues to set in place a psychological warfare programme against the Solidarity leaders. Some of them were revealed to their friends as homosexuals (real or supposed). Others developed problems with their wives, who received "informal" evidence that their husbands were using the political struggle as an excuse for sexual adventures.

The SB clearly scored some points in the months following martial law. However, the head of the KGB, Vadim Pavlov, considered his Polish opposite numbers "too soft and indecisive". They thought it was impossible to put all 40 000 trade union members in prison.

In the absence of mass repression, Wałęsa was targeted in a more vicious fashion. Unbeknown to him, he was filmed with his older brother Stanisław, in an incriminating documentary which was shown on Polish prime time television: a skilful weaving together of real images, recordings of various public speeches, and passages read by a sound-alike. The film tried to convince people that Wałęsa had a personal fortune of one million dollars, which he was considering investing in the Vatican bank. The aim was to prevent Wałęsa from receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, which he had already been notified about. (He nonetheless obtained the prize.) The press also carried stories that Solidarity had received more than a billion dollars

from the CIA and the Vatican, and that its members were having a good time living it up in the West. What is more, the SB possessed compromising photographs of Wałęsa in bed with one of his mistresses. There were even plans to produce a bogus pornographic film. But the fiasco of the fake documentary stymied the project. Whether the photos were real or not, Poles had every reason to suspect a fraud.

Another angle of attack was considered. When Wałęsa was an electrician at the beginning of the 1970s, he had been contacted by the SB, which opened a file on him and gave him the code name “Bolek”. The KGB dossiers copied by Mitrokhin don’t say to what extent Wałęsa cooperated with the SB in the 1970s. They revealed, however, that the SB tried to intimidate Wałęsa after his imprisonment in 1981 “by reminding him that he had been paid money and that they had received information from him”.[11] In 2008 a book appeared confirming that from 1970 to 1976 Wałęsa had been an informer, hired by the SB; this caused a lively controversy. The Polish Institute of National Remembrance later made an independent analysis. It seems probable that the young Wałęsa, at the time unemployed and with a family to feed, had been approached in 1970 and had collaborated in a limited fashion. There is no doubt whatsoever that his involvement in Solidarity was whole-hearted and sincere. By 1980 he had had nothing to do with the SB for years.

On 26 June 1981, the KGB sent a report[12] to its fellow services from the Hungarian intelligence, pointing to a mole in the Vatican. Considering the report, one can reasonably assume that the mole had been detected by the Vatican: it seems indeed that he’d been drunk.

> The United States government would consider a military intervention the most aggressive act by the USSR since the end of the Second World War. Such an act would have serious and unpredictable consequences as regards international relations for the USSR and the other Socialist countries.
>
> According to an American report, a military intervention in Poland would trigger massive resistance in which a large section of the Polish army would take part. In this case the United States would supply all the help necessary to the Polish rebels, by sea and by land […]
>
> If, despite all appeals, a military intervention does take place, the Pope intends to use his diplomatic passport to go to his native

country and call the people to civil (and not military) resistance. The Curia opposes the Pope's extreme activities on behalf of Poland, but it is powerless.

Such an apocalyptic picture was obviously designed to make Soviet leaders think twice about the possibility of military intervention.

Another report from the Hungarian services was circulated in December 1981 by the KGB. "The promulgation of martial law in Poland has created strong anxiety in the Vatican. Its leaders fear that it might be the beginning of a civil war which would produce considerable human casualties."

Finally, a report from the Stasi[13] in January 1982 claimed that those responsible in the Vatican saw Poland not as a state which could transform into a Western regime in the short term, but as a "source of infection" for the Eastern bloc, which would force the other Eastern bloc countries to grant economic concessions to their populations. The source of this report was probably located in the Pope's Secretariat.

In the spring of 1982, a poll ordered by the government showed that 80% of Poles wanted to see Solidarity resume the status it had before martial law. In October, the government banned Solidarity: a violation of basic rights, the Pope fulminated.

After John Paul II's first visit to Poland, Eugen Brammertz, the "Lichtblick" source, provided a detailed account of the Polish prelates' influence on Vatican policy, and the contacts of the Holy See with the CIA and the BND over the Polish crisis. "Lichtblick" warned that Opus Dei or the Order of Malta might be collaborating with the CIA. With 75 000 members in 87 countries, he explained, Opus Dei was becoming the main anti-communist force within the Church, with the tacit agreement of the Pope. The HVA's report went so far as to accuse Opus Dei of arms and drugs dealing to finance the anti-communist crusade (these allegations were not backed up by facts).

In June 1984, the KGB called an extraordinary conference of all the leaders of the Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Czech, Cuban, East German and Polish secret services. The aim was to prepare joint measures for combating subversive activities by the Vatican. The conference adopted various measures to intensify espionage against the Vatican so as to better understand the positions of the Pope and his close advisors on international

affairs, the relations of the Vatican with Western countries and with China, and the proselytising work of the Vatican on all continents. It was a question of reinforcing penetration and eavesdropping systems. The Secretary of State was a priority target, as were Radio Vatican, the international Catholic organisations and the Gregorian University. The conference recommended the use of blackmail against members of the Curia and Radio Vatican.

The further one advances into the 1980s, the more it seems the leaders of the Eastern bloc services deplored the fact that reports from their agents were becoming rarer, especially those from the Polish service, whose agents had been unmasked one after the other. At the time of John Paul II's third trip to Poland, Eastern bloc spies had been either purged or identified and used to send false information (unbeknown to them, or with their cooperation if they had been turned).

The CIA appears on stage

From 1983 onwards, records and evidence show that from the beginning the CIA participated directly in the vast international support effort for Solidarity.[14] Its involvement grew progressively. The Paris station of the CIA became its main centre.

Other European stations were mobilised. But nothing could be done from Warsaw, where CIA agents were under close surveillance. The CIA decided not to collaborate with other European services, which meant that the French were not kept officially informed. However, the DST was not completely ignorant of what the Americans were up to. Exceptions were made for the benefit of MI6 and Mossad. The latter still had good networks in Eastern Europe and helped to smuggle equipment into Poland.

The first recruit for the CIA operation was a Polish émigré, Broda, code-named QRGUIDE. Born in Poland, he joined the first opposition movements at the end of the 1960s. He printed and distributed clandestine editions of books and magazines with printing machines installed in his home. He recruited several printers. In the 1970s the SB kept an eye on him and searched his home several times. Martial law was introduced while he was abroad: he decided not to return to Poland and stayed in Paris. The man sincerely wanted to support Solidarity. He accepted money from a "sponsor", without knowing he belonged to the CIA, which enabled him to

buy printing equipment, a fax machine and such like. In mid-1983, twenty or so agents were recruited through QRGUIDE. The next year, there were thirty. The dispatch of equipment and money followed black market routes, but the CIA did not know the details of the channels.

At the beginning of 1983, Polish police and intelligence units carried out raids throughout the country. Printing workshops were destroyed and their workers arrested, while stocks of pamphlets were confiscated. Images of these confiscations were shown on television accompanied by denunciations of Western countries who were involved in delivering this material.

The SB made a great effort and managed to infiltrate one of its agents into a maritime network between Sweden and Poland, which they dismantled. The SB and the KGB were now convinced that the CIA was involved but could not prove it. As reinforcements, the KGB decided to send a large contingent of Polish-speaking officers to the Soviet Embassy in Warsaw and to the consulates in Gdańsk (Danzig), Poznań and Szczecin (Stettin). Other agents pretended to be tourists and tried to make contact with Solidarity.

In the year after martial law was introduced, the SB identified more than 700 underground opposition groups, carried out more than 10 000 arrests, bugged the homes of thousands of families, and recruited informers everywhere. The smuggling of equipment supplied by the CIA became more and more difficult. After the police seized a refrigerated truck equipped with a secret compartment, the captured vehicle was exhibited on television.

The system breaks up

The Pope’s second trip to Poland took place in 1983. The atmosphere in the country was gloomy. The economy had been hard hit by Western sanctions. The Polish Church followed a prudent line under Glemp’s iron rule. The visit had to be exclusively religious. The Pope knew that it would give a lead to the Poles: whether to ease off the struggle or intensify it. Jaruzelski tried to buy civil peace by granting building permission for new churches on a large scale. He expected the Pope to neutralise the most extreme faction of Solidarity. The Pope pleaded for an end to martial law and the

restoration of the rights defined in the Gdańsk agreements. In fact, martial law was lifted a month later.

On 27 February 1985, the Vatican received a visit from the Soviet minister of foreign affairs, Andrei Gromyko. He was a veteran, having been a member of all the USSR governments since Stalin. He made an unexpected proposal: the USSR would like to discuss setting up diplomatic relations with the Holy See. John Paul II didn't know this yet, but the General Secretary of the USSR Communist Party, Konstantin Chernenko, was dying and Gorbachev was about to succeed him.

Soon after he was nominated General Secretary, Gorbachev went to Warsaw and met with Jaruzelski for five hours. Both men talked about the Soviet system and how it needed to evolve; then they discussed the question of the Church and Wojtyła, whom Jaruzelski spoke of in a positive manner, as he later stated. The Polish leader realised there had been a shift within the Soviet bloc. Jaruzelski told Glemp about his talks with Gorbachev and told himself that he could act as the go-between between the Pope and Gorbachev. The Pope saw Gorbachev as a "good man", who would probably fail to reform communism while at the same time praying for it to succeed. He confided in Father Mieczysław Maliński, his former fellow seminarian. "Perestroika is an avalanche that we have unleashed and it's going roll on … Perestroika is a continuation of Solidarity. Without Solidarity there would be no Perestroika."[15]

On 11 September 1986, the Polish authorities announced a general amnesty and the freeing of political prisoners. Freedom of assembly was re-established. On 13 January 1987, for the first time since 1983, the Pope and Jaruzelski met again in Rome for a 90-minute talk, which both men considered later as historic. Jaruzelski became himself the interpreter of Gorbachev's "new thinking". The Polish regime continued its liberalisation process little by little. Censorship was eased, freedom to move around was restored.

Solidarity re-emerged into civilian life. It had become a real political movement, riven by personal and ideological conflicts. Wałęsa had to exert himself to unite the various trends in a Provisional Council. April 1987 was marked by the historic visit of Gorbachev to meet the Pope. He pleaded for autonomy so that nations could freely decide their own destinies and their

own political systems. Some leaders didn't agree with this new policy, especially East Germany's Erich Honecker and Romania's Ceauşescu.

In 1987 the Pope made his third visit to Poland. On this occasion, a general amnesty was decreed. On 12 June 1987, the Pope officiated at an outdoor Mass in Gdańsk in front of 750 000 people. He was much less careful politically than in 1983 and gave an impromptu speech in support of Solidarity. "Every day I pray for my country and for the workers, and I pray for that particular Polish symbol: Solidarity. I pray for those who are linked to this heritage, in particular those who had to make sacrifices for it." This passage electrified the crowd. The visit catalysed the rebirth of Solidarity and opened the way for a Polish version of perestroika. Poles finally became aware that the end of communist power was close at hand. The regime seemed outdated.

Negotiations on disarmament between Gorbachev and Reagan had started. But that didn't prevent the CIA from continuing its destabilisation activities. From June 1987 onwards, new CIA-designed technology enabled television programmes to be interrupted and messages praising Solidarity to appear on TV screens, or calling on people to listen at a particular time to a particular radio station within range of secret transmitters. A few minutes later, a police truck with a satellite dish would arrive to track down the pirate transmitter. Having to do so hundreds of times every day all over the country was humiliating for the regime.

In 1986–7, the CIA went all out to infiltrate video cassettes, floppy disks and micro-transmitters. The Polish authorities thought that almost 10 million cassettes were in circulation. There were more than 15 000 antennae in the country that could receive programmes broadcast by satellite.[16] The KGB was furious with Poland and thought it was the weak link among the Eastern bloc countries. The KGB's boss, Viktor Chebrikov, encouraged the SB to recruit more informers and strengthen the presence of its teams on the ground. An attempt was made to jam Radio Free Europe broadcasts. Unexpected checks were increased at ports and at border posts, which enabled secret equipment to be seized more frequently. It became obvious that the Polish police had increasingly accurate information about the arrival of clandestine cargo.

Endgame

In February 1988, the Polish government announced further price increases for basic goods. From April, widespread strikes that had mass support paralysed the country. Many young workers, who weren't present during Solidarity's initial struggles and were not members of the trade union, took up extreme stances. The USSR was then in a position of weakness. Gorbachev began to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. In July, the Russian leader went to Poland with a message for Jaruzelski: the USSR desperately needed technology and credits from the West to revive its moribund economy. All confrontation was henceforth out of the question. The government had to start a dialogue with Solidarity. These discussions led to what had seemed impossible several months earlier: a new constitution for Poland.

On 5 April 1989, an agreement was signed legalising the trade unions, including Solidarity, creating the post of president in place of first secretary of the Communist Party, and establishing a Senate. Power devolved now to two chambers. In future legislative elections, 65% of the seats of the assembly were reserved for the Communists, while the other 35% were open to competition, as were all the seats in the new Senate.

The CIA's last mission was to help Solidarity prepare for these elections. The trade union received photocopiers, fax machines, campaign material and, of course, cash. The CIA also started a campaign to poach officers from the Eastern bloc secret services. The wind was turning, and it was time for the most opportunistic to sell what they knew. The USSR was facing large-scale infiltration in what used to be its private hunting ground.

During the election campaign, Wałęsa's popularity was put to use in supporting Solidarity candidates, who posed alongside him on campaign posters. On 4 June, Poland ceased to be communist country. That same day, demonstrators in Tiananmen Square in Beijing were massacred. Solidarity's victory at the polls was beyond all predictions. It won 261 seats out of a possible 262 for which it was allowed to compete. Most of the priests told their flocks to vote for Solidarity. It was a disaster for the authorities, who never imagined there'd be such a result. Jaruzelski, who had resigned as prime minister and stood for president, was only just elected, as a result of the abstention of some Solidarity electors. He appointed Tadeusz Mazowiecki as prime minister, a Catholic intellectual close to Wałęsa. Solidarity was now in power. The movement even had the luxury of poaching certain Communists to make up its team.

After communism collapsed, the American Congress reduced the budgets for US clandestine activities. The Paris bureau of the CIA had to stop its Polish activities. Director Casey wasn't able to enjoy the victory: he died in May 1987. According to official reports, the CIA had spent "only" $20 million helping Solidarity. To that must be added the non-clandestine help from the National Endowment for Democracy, amounting to $9 million, and from AFL-CIO, the trade union organisation, amounting to $4 million. There are no figures available to estimate the help given directly by the Vatican, but it must amount to some hundreds of millions of dollars. The SB archives enable us to calculate the quantity of clandestine equipment, newspapers, and cassettes seized by the Polish authorities.[17] In seven years, they confiscated some 4 million pamphlets, 2.4 million books and magazines, 48 offset printing presses, and 20 000 reams of paper.

* * *

The series of events in Poland set off a shock wave in the communist camp. In September, Hungary opened its borders with Austria, and dozens of East Germans flooded into the country en route to West Germany. In October, hundreds of thousands of East Germans demonstrated in the streets, demanding the resignation of Honecker, who was forced to resign. His successor, Egon Krenz, opened the border with the West on 9 November; there was a mad rush. The following day, the Germans started to smash the Berlin Wall to pieces. Romania, for its part, went through a bloody revolution.

On 1 December 1989, Gorbachev made his first visit to the Vatican. The Curia was fizzing with excitement: all its members watched the First Secretary's arrival from their windows or on television. The almost seventy-year-old Cold War seemed to end that day. In the Soviet Union, Gorbachev was still in command and negotiated an arms reduction agreement with the Americans, which he hoped would allow him to revive his economy. After his visit to the Pope, he flew to Malta where he met President Bush. The Pope and Gorbachev got on well, especially in their agreement on the need to preserve the unity of the Soviet Union.

The Vatican believed that the collapse of the global order as conceived at Yalta had freed the world from a number of forces (nationalist and racial conflicts) which had led to World War II. The Pope wanted Bush to support

Gorbachev in his aim of keeping the Soviet Union as a federation of peoples. Gorbachev promised the Pope, whom he needed, to introduce a law on the freedom of conscience. Everywhere in the Eastern bloc, the communists were swept away by elections.

In August 1991, there was an attempt in Russia at a *coup d'état*. Gorbachev was placed under house arrest. Boris Yeltsin, the president of the Federal Republic of Russia, transformed the parliament into the HQ of the resistance. A radio transmitter belonging to a priest, Father van Straaten, was smuggled into the parliamentary kitchen in a lorry of vegetables. Yeltsin could thereby keep in touch with the outside world and receive support from the West. The plotters were overthrown and Gorbachev was freed. But his hour had passed: he quit his post in December and left the country to Boris Yeltsin.

* * *

In several interviews Gorbachev, as well as Jaruzelski and Wałęsa, declared that this unbelievable cascade of events would not have taken place without John Paul II. The Pope had been the chief engineer of a non-violent revolution in Eastern Europe, thanks to a talent and skill that corresponded very exactly to the historic moment. Through his public statements and his visits to Poland, he had been able to galvanise the Polish people. He set up an intelligence organisation unique in the history of the Church. This enabled him to maintain a constant dialogue with his opponents, primarily Jaruzelski, and with his allies, and to remain completely abreast of the Polish situation. He constantly manoeuvred the pawns on the chessboard to maximum effect without crossing the red line of direct conflict. He also knew how to rally enormous resources to support Solidarity materially. More than any other modern pontiff, Wojtyła showed an appreciation of intelligence and secret activity beyond that of the majority of heads of state. The irony was that all his life he had been prepared and trained for this secret action by those that he was to fight.

With hindsight, it is surprising that the extraordinary mobilisation of the Eastern bloc intelligence services against the Vatican and their very real penetration of the Church didn't really thwart his plans. The unique structure of the Curia provides a partial explanation: the small number of people actually in authority (some of the congregations were not worth

spying on), the culture of secrecy and compartmentalisation, and finally the difficulty of identifying the actual roles of each and every member. It was ultimately of no importance that Cardinal Casaroli's apartment was stuffed with microphones since, under John Paul II, the Secretary of State was not involved very much with the affairs of the Eastern bloc. If we are aware today, at least partly, of the members of the Pope's little "Polish mafia" who used to meet in out-of-the-way places, it was difficult to identify them at the time, for they were dispersed among official positions that seemed to be peripheral. And each no doubt had no idea of much of what his colleagues were up to.

The SB nevertheless managed to place a source in this group. A few months after John Paul II's election, the Polish Episcopal Conference was looking for a priest with experience in journalism and knowledge of the Vatican to draw up press communiqués. Cardinal Wyszyński chose Father Konrad Stanisław Hejmo, a 43-year-old Dominican, who had been close to Cardinal Wojtyła at university, and had worked in the Vatican, welcoming Polish pilgrims. He was close to Dziwisz. In 2005 he was one of the few priests who had free access to the bedroom of the Pope, who was then dying. It was he who organised the pilgrimage of one million Poles wanting to attend John Paul II's funeral. But three days after the ceremony, Father Hejmo returned to Warsaw in a hurry. A scandal was about to break.

The Institute of National Remembrance, which had been sifting through the SB's files for years, waited for the death of the Pope to let off a bomb and reveal the 700-page dossier on Father Hejmo. He had in fact been an agent of the SB, code-named Dominik. The evidence was damning. The file contained even the sound recordings made of his meetings with his controlling officer. From the time of his editorship-in-chief of the Catholic monthly *W Drodze*, Hejmo had faithfully reported the differences of opinion and minor conflicts within the Polish clergy to the SB. He denounced priests who were openly hostile to the regime. In return, he obtained permission to increase the print runs of his monthly (at the time the paper quota for the press was fixed). When Hejmo was moved to Rome, the SB transferred him to the foreign intelligence service. Very quickly, Hejmo became a major source. He gave information on the activities of the papal administration, as well as on the transmission of confidential information by the Pope. Hejmo helped the secret service identify several bishops entrusted with carrying the Pope's clandestine messages to Poland.

One of the historians of the Institute, Paweł Machcewicz, reports: “His position was an ideal one for observing the Pope’s entourage. He transmitted information to the service about the Pope’s pilgrimages, whether or not he met Wałęsa during such and such a trip to Poland, details of his timetable. Hejmo informed on the Vatican’s preparations for a visit by General Jaruzelski. These were useful items not only for the service but also for the state and the party’s leaders, who could thus refine their strategy and better prepare for their discussions with the Vatican.”

Confronted by this media storm, Hejmo pleaded naivety, reminding everybody that many Polish priests at the time were contacted and followed by the intelligence services without their giving away sensitive information. His superiors moved him from Rome and sent him to a monastery, but he was not defrocked.

Indulgence is a Christian virtue, but it does also suggest limited damage. Without doubt, only the Pope himself and his secretary Dziwisz had an overall view of things. The course of history would have been different had the services of the state managed to identify and exploit the faithful Stanisław’s vulnerabilities.

22

NEW CHALLENGES

What does a pope do after accomplishing his “historic mission”? Although Wojtyła no doubt savoured his historic victory with his entourage, events started imposing new preoccupations on him. His native Poland didn’t celebrate for very long. In June 1991, the Pope made his fourth trip to Poland, where he was welcomed by President Wałęsa. The Church was losing its influence. Many Poles thought that it had too much power. The young were indifferent to the Pope’s warnings about sexual issues. Attempts to abolish the right to voluntary termination of pregnancy were not at all well received. In 1995 an ex-communist president succeeded Wałęsa. Poland had become a European democracy with all that implied about political change.

Moreover, there were increasing concerns about the Pope’s health. A pre-cancerous tumour was removed from his colon in July 1992. In November 1993, he dislocated a shoulder. In April 1994, he slipped in his bathtub and needed to have a hip prosthesis implanted. This didn’t exactly reduce his activities, but nonetheless it did slow down their pace.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Vatican’s strategists were much preoccupied by the Middle East and relations with Islam. The Archbishop of Bordeaux, Jean-Louis Tauran, the “minister of foreign affairs” who had been based in Lebanon in the 1980s, was the Curia’s expert on these

questions. Iraq was the first big crisis of the post-Cold War period. The Curia discovered on this occasion that their alliance with the White House was no longer held.

The Pope didn't lead any more

Although some prelates thought that John Paul II would exercise an uncontested moral authority and exert increased influence after the fall of communism, they were no doubt surprised by the American attitude during the Gulf War. At the White House, the former vice-president George Bush had replaced Ronald Reagan, and no matter how respectful he was, he didn't seem prepared to deviate from the path of war he'd adopted after Saddam Hussein's army invaded Kuwait in August 1990. In November 1990, Secretary of State Casaroli met George Bush in Washington. Jean-Louis Tauran went off to Baghdad. Both the Pope's envoys tried in vain to convince the people they spoke to that war would prove a dead end.

In all, the Pope made no fewer than 55 public declarations and communiqués in opposition to the war. While in mid-January 1991 the world was following CNN live and the beginnings of "Desert Storm", he still sent letters to George Bush and Saddam Hussein asking them for "a generous last-minute gesture" that would preserve peace. The appeal was not heard.

What was worse, a large number of American and European clergy declared they were in favour of the war.[1] But the Pope frequently repeated his anti-war position. Interestingly, it generated a certain amount of gratitude from important people in the Arab and Muslim world. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation thus welcomed the Pope's efforts to develop Islamic–Christian dialogue.[2]

The Holy See involved itself in helping obtain the freedom of Western hostages in Saddam Hussein's hands. The Chaldean Patriarch, Raphael I Bidawid, who had the Pope's trust and the friendship of the Iraqi minister of foreign affairs, Tariq Aziz, played a role in the wings. Above all, we meet an old acquaintance again, Archbishop Hilarion Capucci, who emerged from the shadows at this time. John Paul II decided to use him for secret missions, for example in Iran for secret negotiations with the regime of the mullahs. Armed with his very special status as a member of the PLO,

Capucci met Saddam Hussein for some time: he persuaded him to negotiate with the Americans. On 30 December, Casaroli's team seemed optimistic. With John Paul II's agreement, the European Community put itself forward as a mediator. But the United States didn't want to hear anything but the total and unconditional withdrawal of the Iraqis. The discussions came to a sudden end. In December, Cardinal Casaroli offered his resignation. He was replaced by Mgr Sodano.

In a situation where roles had been reversed, the Pope found himself supported by Russia and part of the Arab world. Facing him were most of the Catholic countries, including Italy. Israel was very likely to show its resentment by placing a veto on the Vatican's participation in the forthcoming Madrid conference in preparation for Israeli–Palestinian dialogue. The Gulf War therefore brought up the question of the Vatican recognising Israel. The issue had dragged on for a long time, as the Vatican feared it would put the Christians of the East in danger. But John Paul II's new image in the Arab world meant that progress could be made. In June 1992, a Labour majority came to power in Tel Aviv. The discussions intensified, all the more so as the prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, showed that he was willing to reach an agreement with the PLO. This was now achieved with the Oslo Accords, which were concluded in 1993 under the auspices of the new American president, Bill Clinton. On 15 June 1994, the Vatican and Israel formally established diplomatic relations.

Ten years later, history seemed to be repeating itself when John Paul II found he was faced with the son of George Bush, George W., who had succeeded his father and Bill Clinton in the White House, and wanted in turn to go to war with Iraq for its alleged complicity with al-Qaeda. When Cardinal Pio Laghi, John Paul II's personal emissary, found himself in the presence of the American president, who declared that Saddam Hussein had permitted al-Qaeda training camps in Iraq, he answered, "Are you sure? Where is the proof?"[3]

The Vatican had some reasons to doubt the existence of a Bin Laden–Hussein axis and the presence of weapons of mass destruction—arguments that were put forward by neo-conservatives in the Bush administration. The supposed evidence the CIA collected did not survive closer examination. This was also the conclusion that the French DGSE reached, which they passed on to Rome. This time, France did not follow its American ally. Several French priests served as contacts for diplomats and the French

secret services with the Vatican. Among them was Jean-Marie Benjamin, no doubt one of the most original of characters. From 1991 to 1994, he had been the assistant to the ex-Secretary of State, Cardinal Casaroli, who had stayed on as a special envoy for the Vatican. At the end of 2002, when France had to decide whether or not to veto military action against Iraq at the United Nations, the DGSE contacted Benjamin to take a message from President Chirac discreetly to Tariq Aziz. He went to Baghdad on 24 January 2003 and took advantage of his visit to put forward the idea of a meeting between the Pope and Aziz.

A few days later, a DGSE officer asked the priest to organise a meeting with Tariq Aziz during his next visit to Rome. France had a proposal to make: it was ready to offer him political asylum. During a visit to the basilica of St Francis at Assisi on 14 February 2003, Aziz had a secret interview but refused the proposal.

Annoyed by the Pope's offer, the Bush administration mobilised neo-conservative Catholic ideologues like the journalist Michael Novak, whom it sent to Rome to plead the cause of a "just war". This didn't change the Pope's views in the slightest: he agreed with the European decision to rely on United Nations inspections. Once again, this position had no effect on American policy. What followed is now well known.

The ghosts of the Balkans

The credit John Paul II acquired in the Arab world was to be partly lost in the cauldron of the Balkans. In this matter, as in others, Opus Dei seemed to be engaged in manoeuvring. Members of the Curia noted how powerless it was to prevent Opus Dei from continually increasing its influence on the pontificate. In 1984, Joaquín Navaro-Valls, a doctor and disciple of Balaguer, was made director of the Holy See's press office, a very sensitive position. In December 1994, Opus Dei took another step forward when the Spanish bishop Juliàn Herranz Casado was appointed archbishop and president of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts. He was the first Opus Dei archbishop and the first to occupy a position of the first order within the Curia. He became a cardinal in 2003.

When communism collapsed, the disintegration of Yugoslavia set off conflicts between the various nationalists all over again. In the spring of 1990, Slovenia and Croatia, both largely Catholic, organised elections that

led to independence a year later. The Yugoslav federal army invaded Croatia at once. The Vatican was the first state to recognise Croatia's independence, followed by Germany, which put a lot of pressure on the European Community to support the movement. Chancellor Kohl had to take into account the half-million Croats living in Germany. Given what had happened between the Nazis and Croatia during the war, Germany thought it was better for the Pope to take a stand on this subject. Dr Bozo Dimnik, who organised secret meetings between the German minister of foreign affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, and the Croatian leader, Stjepan Mesić, said to the journalist David Yallop: "Genscher wanted to hide behind the Pope's cassock."[4] This was why he sent Mesić back to Secretary of State Sodano and Prime Minister Andreotti. Mesić, who became the president of Croatia, confided in Yallop the tone of his meetings with Sodano on 6 December 1991: "Sodano told me that the Pope was fully informed of the Croatian claims and that he supported them. He also told me that the Holy Father agreed to defend the independence of Croatia."[5]

At the end of 1991, European leaders gathered to complete the negotiation of the Treaty of Maastricht. The Germans insisted on introducing a resolution in support of Croatian and Slovenian independence, whereas Europe's official position was to push for Yugoslav unity. Genscher threatened to torpedo the treaty if the resolution was not accepted. In the wings, the Secretariat of State had worked for several months at persuading the hesitant chancelleries, eventually obtaining Italian and Austrian support. Despite French and British opposition, the Germans finally prevailed. The European Community simply included the conditions that the Croats and the Slovenes had to commit themselves to respecting minority rights, to negotiating border disputes in good faith and guaranteeing democratic institutions. Germany and the Vatican could pride themselves on having turned the tables.

The conflict between Croatia and Serbia lasted until the Dayton Agreements of 1995. Interestingly, the Serbs denounced the influence of Opus Dei in Croatia. One of the daughters-in-law of the Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman, was a member of Opus Dei, and the regional vicar of Opus Dei in Zagreb, Father Stanislas Crnica, had an open door to Tudjman's office. The Vatican and its new nuncio in Zagreb,[6] Archbishop Giulio Einaudi, favoured Croatia purchasing arms to protect itself against Serbia.

In September 1994 John Paul II went to Croatia on the occasion of the 900th anniversary of the Siege of Zagreb. It was the first visit by a pope for eight centuries. Here John Paul II publicly expressed his support for Croatia against Serbia. Shortly after this visit, the American State Department gave the green light for the private military company MPRI to sign a contract as a consultant to the Croatian Ministry of Defence under the fancy title of "aid program for democratic transition". According to a report by the French secret services, the Croats also received help with software and weapons guidance systems from the United States to give them tactical superiority.

In August 1995 the Croatian army launched Operation Storm to regain control of the enclave of Krajina, which had broken away from Croatia with Serbian support. Cardinal Franjo Kuharić of Zagreb considered this war legitimate. In a few days the Serbs had been chased out of the zone and had to concede defeat.

Islamist threats

The variety of geopolitical situations and approaches within the Curia prevented the Vatican from developing a unified strategy in its relations with Islamic countries. The Vatican, for example, had a little band of wandering priests who went to Saudi Arabia undercover, as businessmen, bankers, engineers and so on, to celebrate Mass secretly and administer the sacraments to Catholics, always on private premises. Opus Dei also had visitors in the region. The Saudi secret services believed that Opus Dei was the Pope's secret service. Its project of evangelisation was seen as similar to the work of the Muslim Brotherhood.

For Opus Dei, Africa was the first battlefield of the religious conflicts to come. Islam was rapidly gaining ground. In February 1993, a high-risk visit was organised for John Paul II to Khartoum, on the initiative of the nuncio of Sudan, Archbishop Erwin Josef Ender. This step was a surprise for many European chancelleries, as Sudan was known as a country which exported radical Islam. Intelligence services described the regime's second-in-command and religious leader, Hassan al-Tourabi, as the financier of Islamist extremism, who had contacts with Bin Laden. According to the American State Department, the country had a dozen terrorist training camps, supported by Iran and by Iraqi weapons. John Paul II's visit

represented an unusual public relations opportunity for al-Tourabi, who was even invited to the Vatican. John Paul II had his own agenda; he asked him to stop killing Christians. The regime wanted to show it was tolerant. But two days after the Pope's visit, the attack on the World Trade Center in New York took place. Half the terrorist commando was Sudanese. Could one really talk of peace with al-Tourabi?

The prize for the most dangerous trip goes to the visit John Paul II made to the Philippines in 1995, on the occasion of World Youth Day. The episode could have been the subject of a Hollywood film. At the end of 1994, the CIA warned its contacts in the Curia about a possible al-Qaeda attack on the Pope during his coming visit to the Philippines. As usual, John Paul II showed he was impervious to any suggestions that he alter his programme. All that was left to do was to notify the Philippine authorities and then start praying.

On 6 January 1995, a few days before the Pope's arrival, a police inspector, Aida Fariscal, was the officer on duty in a Manila police station when a report came that smoke was escaping from an apartment in the Malate quarter. The firemen and the policemen who turned up at the scene believed it was a false alarm: there were no signs of a fire in the flat. But Aida was not satisfied. She enquired about who was living in the apartment. When she was informed it was two Arabs, she remembered an intelligence report that had been circulated at the end of 1994 about the possible arrival of a Middle Eastern terrorist group. She ordered a search. In the apartment they discovered photos of John Paul II pinned on a board, a Bible, a priest's cassock, a laptop and everything necessary to make a bomb. One of the occupiers of the apartment was none other than Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind behind the attacks on the World Trade Center. But the Philippine police were unable to lay their hands on him. On the other hand, his accomplice, Abdul Hakim Mourad, was arrested a few hours later when he returned to the flat. He had made the mistake of leaving the liquid mixture as it was, uncovered and ready for the bomb; it had started to let off smoke.

The Filipinos alerted the FBI, which hurriedly sent a team. As far as the Vatican was concerned, everything had to continue as planned. Not a word could be allowed to reach the press before the Pope's arrival. The Filipino presidential security group, charged with the close protection of the Pope during his visit, was under great pressure, for there could be no guarantee

that there were no other attacks planned for the occasion. Everything went perfectly. But it was a first: Islamic terrorism had presented a real threat to the life of the Pope. Other plots followed.

In 1997, a network of Iranian spies placed a bomb under a bridge that the Pope had to cross during a visit to Bosnia. Some 20 anti-tank mines were discovered by the police before the convoy passed through. In the same year, members of Hezbollah planned to hide a bomb in a colonnade on Saint Peter's Square, near a point which the Popemobile regularly passed. Once again the plot was discovered in time by the Italian police. John Paul II remained quite indifferent to these incidents. But nobody in the Curia thought of sending a little present thanking Aida Fariscal.[7]

23

MARCINKUS GOES … THE CORRUPTION STAYS

On 11 February 1987 there was ceremony to celebrate the anniversary of the IOR. Paul Marcinkus presented the Pope with a gold medal and a cheque for $150 million—most of the bank's profits for the past year. Apparently the IOR had been quick to recover. It had unexpectedly received as deposits enormous sums from the corrupt dictator of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos. These sums apparently came from misappropriating Philippine treasury funds, but nobody made a fuss. Marcos died two years later in exile in Hawaii. The IOR never said anything about what became of the Filipino money placed in its safekeeping. While being kept up to date by Andreotti, Marcinkus remained confined in the Vatican all through 1987; only in 1988 did the Supreme Court of Rome agree with the Vatican lawyers, confirming that the Italian courts didn't have jurisdiction over any of the Vatican's citizens.

Although some people still wondered why John Paul II kept Marcinkus at the head of the IOR, the date of his departure gave a clear answer: 1990. In fact, it was at the end of 1989 that his retirement was decided. One might just as well say that after communism collapsed, the inconveniences of keeping the American at this post greatly outweighed the advantages. There were no more secret wars to finance. Mennini resigned too at the same time as Marcinkus. Did that mean that the intrigues and hidden money had come to an end? Let's not get carried away.

The IOR: The infernal machine

To replace Marcinkus, Secretary of State Casaroli chose a Milanese banker. Angelo Caloia seemed to tick all the boxes: chairman of Mediocredito Lombardo, he was also professor of economics at a Catholic university. Caloia didn't have the same aura as Marcinkus. He had to wait two years before meeting the Pope. Some of the older IOR employees did not recognise his authority. Mgr Renato Dardozzi, one of Casaroli's trusted men, and a member of the joint Italo-Vatican commission in the Ambrosiano affair, was given the job of watching over the bank. He was annoyed to note that certain practices persisted, in particular the pseudo-institutional charity accounts and strange transfers to politicians. He was particularly worried by an account opened in June 1987 in the name of the Cardinal Francis Spellman Foundation (a foundation that didn't exist anywhere). The two accounts' signatories were Mgr Donato De Bonis and Giulio Andreotti. From 1987 to 1993, the funds circulating through this account amounted to 26.4 million euros, according to the journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi's sources.[1]

In the bank's internal memos, De Bonis and Andreotti were only identified by pseudonyms. Employees were very much aware of the explosive nature of these transactions. To be sure, a small part of these funds was sent to religious orders, monasteries or convents. But a great part turned up in the accounts of Andreotti's political friends. Not to mention the suitcases of cash withdrawn by De Bonis, en route to unknown destinations. The deceased Cardinal Spellman's patronage of this account, intended for managing hidden funds, was particularly revealing.

This was the first time that there were leaks about the IOR's transgressions: it was learnt that the Vatican Bank was still a functioning "infernal machine" in the Vatican's heart. And that it was still connected to all the big politico-financial scandals of the post-Cold War period. In 1992 a full-scale investigation into political corruption started in Italy with Operation Mani Pulite (Clean Hands); it gave rise to one of the biggest scandals in post-war European history. Some 5 000 figures were involved; several hundred were accused, half of whom were from the Italian parliament. When this far-reaching inquiry started, the directors of the IOR considered the delicate question of the Spellman Foundation account. They made up a new rule: no member of the bank, if he retired, could manage an

account which he did not own personally. De Bonis simply ignored the rule. He seemed not to be frightened of anything that Caloia, his ostensible boss, could do. De Bonis was highly respected by many from the nobility, the arts and Italian politics, starting with Andreotti.

But the Spellman account was not the only one that created problems. As the investigation progressed, the list of unknown religious associations got longer. They all had in common accounts whose volume of financial movements was very much above the norm. A secret report dated 7 July 1992 reviewed all the ingredients of the potential scandal which could take the IOR back to the Marcinkus period. De Bonis was evidently at the heart of the bank's controversial activities. The report was addressed to the Pope's personal secretary, Mgr Dziwisz. There was no reply. It is not even known if the Pope ever looked at it.

In 1981, at the beginning of Marcinkus's reign, there were about 10 000 accounts held by rich Italians, compared with 2 500 belonging to individuals or religious organisations. In the four years after Marcinkus left, Caloia identified almost $400 million worth of suspicious transactions, which involved transfers to Swiss and Luxembourg banks. The problem was that certain transactions were carried out at the request of people who had the Pope's ear. In 1992, the Italian examining magistrates thus implicated an old friend, the Slovak Cardinal Pavel Hnilica, as well as the flamboyant Flavio Carboni. The police discovered blank cheques signed by Hnilica drawn on an IOR account. Carboni apparently received the equivalent of $2.8 million in exchange for Calvi's attaché case. What does one do with such a "sensitive" customer as Hnilica? The magistrates sought information discreetly via the Secretariat of State, which already had doubts about him. In the 1980s, Hnilica often went to Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina; this was an important sanctuary on a pilgrim route since the Virgin Mary's alleged appearance there in 1981. The Franciscan friars at Medjugorje received a large number of donations, which Hnilica directed towards the anti-communist struggle. In fact the money went to the United States and what happened to it afterwards remains unknown.

The problem was that it was dangerous to attack the head of Pro Fratribus. Since the 1960s, he had done so much for the Eastern Churches and had charmed the Pope with the tales of his exploits. At the start of 1984, Hnilica heard the call John Paul II made to bishops throughout the world to pray with him on 25 March for Russia, in the name of the Virgin Mary.

Hnilica, then in India, asked the Soviet Embassy for a visa, obtained it and, on the appointed day, turned up at the Cathedral of the Archangel Saint Michael in Moscow (which had been changed into a museum). There, he recited prayers of consecration, and then went into a church and did the same before saying Mass. Back in Rome, he recounted his exploits to John Paul II, describing the faithful begging him to send them Bibles. The Pope was moved to tears.

In 1992, Hnilica went to the United States and obtained permission from the Conference of Bishops to raise funds in favour of Catholic evangelisation missions in Russia. Then he became the spiritual director of a mystic, Theresa Lopez, who claimed she communicated regularly with the Virgin Mary. He took her to Medjugorje, where she caused a sensation. But the Archbishop of Denver investigated her in 1993, and concluded that her visions had no supernatural origin. Hnilica nonetheless continued to use Theresa, taking her to spiritual retreats for rich Catholics. That same year, he was tried in the Milan courts alongside Flavio Carboni. In the first instance, he was sentenced to three years in prison. The sentence was later overturned on a legal technicality.

In the spring of 1993, Caloia was able at last to score some points: De Bonis was removed from the IOR. He was promoted to bishop and chaplain of the Order of Malta, which gave him diplomatic immunity. The reason for this departure was that a new scandal was about to be disclosed. In October of the same year, the Enimont affair was made public. In order to make things easier for a joint venture between the oil company ENI and the chemical conglomerate Montedison, almost $100 million of bribes and under-the-table payments were distributed to several dozen politicians. In all, 127 people were involved, starting with De Bonis, whom the Italian press nicknamed “Mgr Montedison”. This time the chairman of the IOR, Caloia, agreed to cooperate with the Italian courts. The official position was that the Vatican’s good faith had been abused. That being so, it was worrying that nobody had asked any questions about a recently opened account that had received a deposit of up to $100 million.

The affair scared the political classes stiff. In prison the ENI boss preferred to commit suicide. Caloia learned that $4 million had been put into the Spellman Foundation account. Even more worrying, almost 75% of the bribes had passed through an account held by a manager of Montedison

within the IOR, who was close to De Bonis. Once again, the Italian courts asked the Vatican to explain itself.

Andreotti's name was kept secret by the Vatican; he was never bothered by the Enimont affair. For those in the know, De Bonis had simply continued the system set up by Marcinkus. In the 1990s, several Mafia *pentiti* offered new explanations. In 1994, Francesco Marino Mannoia stated to investigators that Licio Gelli had used the IOR to deposit illegal funds belonging to the Sicilian boss Salvatore Riina. In the same year, the Mafia's Vincenzo Calcara claimed he took suitcases of banknotes from Sicily to Rome in the company of two politicians. When they reached Fiumicino airport, Marcinkus and a cardinal were waiting for them. The group apparently went to the north of the capital, to a lawyer's office. There, Calcara handed over the cash to Marcinkus. A month later the money was made available legally, less a deduction for the IOR's service charges. In spite of these claims, no concrete steps were ever taken. The Italian courts seemed to have come to terms with the Vatican bank's inviolability.

In 1995, the IOR was once again used for laundering $100 million. It all began the previous year when a businessman, Antonio Di Luca, disappeared in San Diego. In his room, documents related to real estate transactions were found totalling some $342 million, together with deposits with the IOR. Di Luca was in business with four mafiosi and a Canadian politician of Italian descent, Alfonso Gagliano. A former CIA agent living in Italy, Roger D'Onofrio, was arrested. He accused the Cardinal of Barcelona, Ricardo María Carles Gordó, of being implicated and of having used an IOR account for transferring $100 million. Carles was close to Opus Dei and to Pope John Paul II. He refused to answer. In 1996 the Italian courts made many arrests in this affair. John Paul II called the cardinal to Rome and decided to appoint him to the Prefecture for Economic Affairs. According to the terms of the Lateran Accords, Carles was henceforth untouchable.

Another embarrassing affair occurred when the Italian police investigated the Archbishop of Naples, Cardinal Michele Giordano, who was suspected of extortion. During a search of the home of his brother, a member of the Camorra, documents were discovered showing that the cardinal had laundered some of the Mafia's dirty money through the IOR. Brought before the courts, the cardinal was finally acquitted in 2000; he

then came before the courts again in 2002 for having sold land belonging to his diocese. The accusations were in turn abandoned.

In 2000, a report made by the University of Melbourne on money laundering classified the Vatican as being in the “laundering paradise” category together with the Cayman Islands, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. A United Nations report said much the same the following year. Certain experts estimated that the equivalent of $55 billion of dirty Italian money passed through the IOR’s accounts. In Mexico, where the Church received large donations, the American Drug Enforcement Administration was convinced that part of the donations came from narcotics traffickers and that the bishops shut their eyes to the money’s origin. The IOR was under pressure from the media to accept reforms.

Dangerous liaisons

It would be too easy to regard the links between the IOR and Mafia money as the product of the “simple” racketeering tendencies embodied by Marcinkus, De Bonis and a few others. The problem was much, much older. It turned out that both the Church *and* the Mafia formed part of the essential history of Italy. And that since the end of the war the Church had had other priorities than to fight organised crime. An anecdote explains the problem better. In May 1993, at Agrigento in Sicily, John Paul II did something totally unheard of: for the first time he violently attacked the Mafia.[2]

The Pope had chosen to go to the places in Sicily that were the most overrun by the Mafia—a triangle drawn by the towns of Agrigento, Caltanissetta and Trapani. At Agrigento, young people had prepared a performance in the stadium in the form of a Greek tragedy, during which they presented the Mafia’s crimes. After the show the Pope denounced “the Mafia’s culture of death”, which he linked directly to the Devil. His diatribe caused a sensation. Perhaps the Pope wanted them to know that he had received loud and clear the messages of Saint Peter’s Square with Ali Agça and the Orlandi business. One can’t be certain. But a response did not take long in coming. In September, Father Puglisi, an anti-Mafia priest in Palermo, was gunned down. An inquiry concluded that his death was a form of retaliation for his having broken the “non-aggression pact” that the Mafia thought it had with the Church.

In Sicily, the Mafia, the Christian Democrats and the Church were all connected together. It is said that for poor people, the Mafia inspired the fear of death, the Church inspired the fear of God, and the Christian Democrats the fear of communism. Several members of the clergy crossed the line separating peaceful coexistence from active cooperation. In 1975, Father Agostino Coppola was arrested and accused of being a high-ranking member of Cosa Nostra. In 1978, the Franciscan monk Fernando Taddei, the prior of the Sant'Angelo Church in Rome, was arrested for laundering Mafia money derived from ransoms.

The Sicilian Christian Democrats had had ties with the Mafia ever since 1947. They used the Mafia for garnering votes and the Mafia used them for the personal interests of its adherents. In Sicily in particular, either one did business with the Mafia or one didn't do business at all. Pino Arlacchi, member of parliament, vice-president of the parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission, and author of the book *Il processo* (The Trial, 1995), said: "It's been a long tradition ever since Italian unification. Politicians asked for electoral support and, in exchange, they guaranteed impunity for offences, had over-zealous investigators transferred, and returned withdrawn arms permits. I've done the sums: from 1958 to 1992, between a third and a half of Sicilian politicians were helped by Cosa Nostra in the elections."[3]

Salvo Lima, who was elected mayor of Palermo in 1958, had the reputation of being "one of Cosa Nostra's creatures". During his term of office, the pillage of the city began with the public markets and jobs secured by favours. Lima was subsequently a European deputy and deputy minister, being replaced on the town council by Vito Ciancimino, his former public works assistant. In 1984, the latter was the first public official in the region to be sentenced for corruption benefiting the Mafia. Lima and Ciancimino were also Giulio Andreotti's tools. Another accomplice of Andreotti, Antonio Gava, was the Naples strongman. He controlled the economy in the region. In the 1980s, he was Andreotti's minister several times. At the end of the decade, he was appointed to head the services fighting organised crime. In 1995 Gava was arrested and sentenced for corruption and for belonging to the Camorra.

24

MURDERS IN THE VATICAN

> "I swear to serve faithfully, loyally and honourably the Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II and his legitimate successors, to sacrifice my life to protect them if necessary …
>
> May God and our patron saints help me to do this!"
>
> Oath of allegiance of the Swiss Guards

On 4 May 1998, the Vatican's official newspaper announced the appointment of Alois Estermann, 49, as head of the Swiss Guards. He lived with his wife Gladys Meza Romero, a former Venezuelan model, who had become a police-woman, then an archivist at the Venezuelan Embassy in Rome. Both of them were very pious and attended Mass regularly. They were to be seen often at Roman diplomatic receptions.

That evening, a nun living in the same building as the Estermann couple heard a noise, went to their flat and discovered the bloodied body of the wife in the entrance. She alerted a Swiss Guard, who found the bullet-ridden body of the husband, as well as of another Swiss Guard, Lance Corporal Cédric Tornay, 23, with a bloodied head. Such carnage within the Vatican was unheard of.

A few months earlier a papal gentleman, in charge of protocol for official visits, had been murdered. But he died in his own home, outside the Vatican, beaten to death, it seems, by a male prostitute. Mgr Alois Jehle, the Swiss Guards chaplain, hurried to inform the Pope's private secretary, Mgr Dziwisz.

Moles among the Swiss Guards

The Italian press and media went into a frenzy. The next day, there were rumours of a tragic case of jealousy; it was suggested that Cédric Tornay and Gladys Meza Romero were having an affair. The newspapers gave a rather flattering portrait of the commandant of the Swiss Guards. He came from a family of farmers, and was the oldest of five brothers. He grew up in the Swiss German village of Beromünster, near Lucerne. Attracted by the army and very pious, he chose to leave the family farm and join the Swiss Guards after his military service. He accompanied the Pope on thirty or so official trips abroad. As a sign of trust, he was even chosen to investigate a Swiss lay person for the Congregation of the Causes of Saints. He settled soon afterwards in Rome, where he met his future wife. They had been married for fifteen years without having any children.

The Vatican's first press communiqué, issued only three hours after the bodies were discovered, claimed that "the information found for the moment pointed to an 'act of madness' by Corporal Tornay".[1] Joaquín Navarro-Valls, the powerful press service head, was a layman, but in the Vatican he was generally thought to have as much authority as a cardinal. According to him, Tornay first shot dead Estermann using two bullets, and then fired on Gladys Meza Romero, before committing suicide by firing a bullet through his mouth. During his press conference the following morning, Navarro-Valls announced that shortly before his death, Tornay had given a comrade a letter for his parents. He had a copy of it but refused to communicate its contents. According to him, the letter confirmed his opinion of an "act of madness" and he believed the investigation would endorse this.

The Pope presented his condolences to Estermann's family. Secretary of State Sodano, at his request, celebrated a funeral Mass for the husband and wife, at which 24 guards in uniform formed a guard of honour.

Two days later, the heroic image of Estermann began to crack. A Berlin paper, the *Berliner Kurier*, claimed that Estermann had been a Stasi agent, with the code name "Werder". Even though the Vatican refused to entertain such an idea, the affair caused a scandal.

The press finally published the famous letter from Tornay to his parents. It is full of mistakes (which are impossible to reproduce here).

Mum,

I hope you will forgive me for what I did it was them who pushed me. This year I was to receive the *benemerenti* [papal medal] and the Lieutenant-Colonel refused to give it to me. After 3 years and 6 months and 6 days spent here putting up with all the injustices the only thing that I wanted they refused me. I had to give a hand to all the remaining guards as well as the Catholic Church. I swore to give my life for the Pope and it's what I've done. I'm sorry to leave you all by yourself but my duty calls me. Tell Sarah, Melinda and Dad that I love you all.

Big kisses to the greatest Mum in the world

Your son who loves you.[2]

Clearly, Tornay expressed a general sense of bitterness, not only against Estermann.

According to the previous commandant of the Swiss Guards, Colonel Roland Buchs, who spoke during a funeral ceremony in Switzerland, Tornay was an idealist and an excellent professional. "He was very sensitive to the way in which others treated him and their reactions affected him deeply. The tension was almost unbearable for him."[3] The implications weren't spelt out, but it seems that, according to his former head, Tornay was ill-treated (by whom?) and couldn't stand it.

The Vatican refused all offers of technical assistance from the Italian police. Two autopsies were conducted in the greatest secrecy by two legal experts, who worked with a very strict confidentiality agreement. The inquiry itself was headed by a judge working part-time for the Vatican and part-time as personnel manager in the Italian parliament, his principal activity. Comments on his lack of experience in criminal inquiries were thus not an offence.

On 8 February 1999, the findings that were released by the inquiry corresponded to what Navarro-Valls had predicted. The final report was very thin and the names of the witnesses had been censored, which tended to make any counter-investigation impossible for journalists. One learned, however, that a friend spoke to Gladys Meza Romero on the telephone, then with Estermann on the day of the crime at 20h46. A short while later the

conversation was interrupted by muffled sounds, probably gunshots. According to the report, it was the wife who opened the door to Cédric Tornay while her husband was on the phone. Tornay then rushed at Estermann with his service weapon, a SIG 9 mm pistol, and fired two shots at him, hitting his left cheek and shoulder. Turning round, he faced Meza Romero, fired but missed her (the bullet went through the apartment door and lodged in the lift door on the landing). A fourth bullet hit Meza Romero. Tornay then knelt and put the barrel of the weapon in his mouth before squeezing the trigger.

To explain all this carnage, the report spoke of “a cyst the size of a pigeon egg discovered in his [Tornay’s] brain during the autopsy”; it also mentioned traces of a derivative of cannabis in his urine, which enabled them to put forward the hypothesis that he regularly took drugs, which induced a fit of paranoia. This claim was reckless on two counts: in the case of regular consumption of cannabis, traces would have been found in Tornay’s blood, which was not the case. And all toxicologists know that cannabis does not make one aggressive. Finally, the report indicated that Tornay suffered from bronchitis at the time of his death, which would have made him “vulnerable” and subject to fits of rage. For the Vatican, the affair was closed and filed away.

The journalist John Follain, a correspondent for the *Sunday Times* in Rome at the time of the affair, investigated this case at length. The mother of Cédric Tornay, Muguette Baudat, was convinced that the Vatican was hiding things. She questioned the letter’s authenticity. According to Luc Brossollet, the Tornay family lawyer, it was a fake. The letter was not signed. The handwriting was easy to imitate, but the capitals used in the letter seemed to be assigned randomly (such as “pope”). Some mistakes were unusual (reçevoir). The letter was addressed to “Muguette Chamorel” (the name of her second husband, which was in the Vatican files) and not to Baudat, which he usually used. The time spent at the Vatican was incorrectly given (one month too many) and this would also have come from the file. In French one wouldn’t add acute accents to Benemerenti,[4] but an Italian might have thought they were needed to correspond to the pronunciation of the Italian “e”.

The chaplain, Alois Jehle, tried to dissuade Muguette Baudat from coming to Rome, making all kinds of excuses, which only fed her suspicion. But she decided to come nonetheless and stood before the mortal

remains of her son placed in a coffin in the Guards' chapel. "And then", she related, "there was this strange scene. A thin, young man, sitting on a bench, started crying and shouting. Nobody went to help him, so I felt obliged to go and comfort him. He told me that his name was Yvon Bertorello, that he was a priest, and that all this was his fault. That he should have been there to prevent Tornay from doing what he did. He even said that my son had been murdered […] The people in the Vatican told me that he was Tornay's spiritual father and that no other man in the Church was as sad as Bertorello."

Who was this person? His name didn't mean anything to the journalists accredited to the Vatican. All I know about Bertorello, she continued, was that he "had both French and Italian nationality, and that he had studied at Écône, a seminary for Catholic fundamentalists in the Lausanne diocese. Then he got to the Vatican and they sent him on all sorts of sensitive missions in Bosnia, Turkey, all over the place. I think he's some kind of spy for the Vatican. I've done all I could to find him, but the magistrates who led the inquiry into Tornay's death said they had no idea who he was […] It was only a few days afterward [following his death] that I remembered that Tornay had told me he had been investigating Opus Dei, which Estermann was close to." She added: "He said he was investigating it with two other guards. I had no idea what it was at the time. He told me it was secretive and dangerous […] Later I found out from some friends of Tornay that Estermann was close to Opus Dei and had tried to recruit guards into it."[5]

A spy talks (a little)

Before examining the various leads which these accounts revealed, it is important to understand who Bertorello was. A *Paris Match* journalist, Victor Guitard, found him and interviewed him. He wrote a short book from the brief interviews, which displayed a lot of vagueness, gaping holes and sometimes contradictions (as there are in his exchanges with John Follain), but there were some interesting bits of information.

The Frenchman was described as being a small, nervous-looking man with acne spots on his temple and a bowl haircut, a prominent Adam's apple, pale cheeks, thick lips. He wore small gold glasses on an aquiline nose and seemed older than his 37 years. He had studied engineering, then

turned to law and later theology. He described himself as an “international consultant” for the sale of gold and jewels to heads of state and VIP customers. He was also involved in NGOs and was active in Armenia. He said he was a deacon, an order lower than priests, and that he had asked for dispensation from his position.

Bertorello said he worked from 1993 for somebody in the Secretariat of State, “Don Jorge, a Jesuit from Cracow”, an escapee from a Nazi camp. He studied in Rome at the Minerva and came across Wojtyła again, with whom he had been involved in theatre before the war. “In the Vatican he’s really created a state within the state, above the Secretariat. He was considered one of the most powerful men in the Holy See. To realise his bold plan to destabilise the communist regimes, the Sovereign Pontiff thought the establishment of a new information system was indispensable.”[6]

This special service was headed by one of the members of his Polish bodyguard.

> The so-called open network was made up of cells spread throughout the world. The so-called closed network didn’t exist officially anymore. Diplomacy was often used as a cover. In reality it was a network of intelligence agents. Some of them might have had some use for the cassock, but they were nevertheless not in Holy Orders. Recruitment varied a lot. Sometimes the Secretariat of State spotted a young priest, fresh out of university, rather modern with affable manners and good-looking, who had not studied at the Minerva, the Vatican’s diplomatic school. In certain instances, young people were co-opted from university, where they were studying history or law. In France they were even selected from among the young scouts of Europe, a paramilitary organisation which linked the French elite to the military academy at Saint-Cyr.[7]

Bertorello, whom Guitard introduced under the fictitious name of Giovanni Saluzzo, had undergone four years of training, in particular at the Minerva, the diplomatic school. “The codes and ciphers were taught him by a high-ranking prelate with a Polish accent. He also had lessons in secret photography, given to him by a prelate with an Italian accent. Finally, he trained secretly with parachute units from the Italian Army.”[8] It was a programme resembling that of the post-war Russicum.

At the time of his talks with Guitard, Bertorello seemed to be having trouble with the Vatican. A cleric close to the Vigilanza suspected him of working for the Eastern bloc because of the number of trips he made to the Ukraine and to Armenia. (This showed, by the way, that the services controlled directly by John Paul II within the Vatican didn’t give any

account of what they were doing to anybody, at the risk of causing confusion.) “I was suspected of belonging to the SISMI, the Italian military secret service. That was the cause of my problems. I was put on trial. There was talk of money transfers worth several million dollars and of drug trafficking. They could not understand how I travelled so much on my Vatican pay of 13 000 francs a month. Then I was acquitted. I told the Vatican that I wanted a letter to clear my name, but also a job, even a token job in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the end, I will get my letter, I’m sure.”[9] Bertorello later told John Follain that he’d received his letter, signed by Jean-Louis Tauran, the minister of foreign affairs.

Given what we know, Bertorello probably wasn’t a very high-ranking spy. He was very likely a messenger used for secret business, a man whose career seems to have gone off the rails. He was made to take the blame for something that was no doubt much bigger than him and he had to pretend to speak to journalists (without actually revealing very much) so that they would formally clear his name. He was perhaps also a collateral victim of internal score-settling. In any event, Bertorello did not obtain a post in the French diplomatic corps, but he did become an author and a writer of comic strip books—with a religious theme, naturally. And he refused to talk about his past.

His evidence does help us, however, to understand the Vatican murders. Tornay, Bertorello admitted, was bisexual, like himself. Cédric was very attractive and had affairs not only with women, but also with men. And he’d had a relationship with Estermann. “It was true that he’d been with Estermann; it lasted two years. They broke it off in January of their last year. But I don’t think it would be right to say they were a couple at that time. It would be better to say that they were together on and off at the time.”[10]

Like many others in the Vatican, Bertorello had not been unreceptive to Cédric Tornay’s charm. In fact, he took him on a professional trip to South Korea, which was against the rules. It’s not saying much, but they were poorly thought of at the apostolic nunciature, where the fact that they were a couple caused surprise. It was no doubt this that encouraged the Vigilanza to hound Bertorello. If homosexual love was a powerful taboo in the Vatican, the Swiss Guards were no exception.

The Swiss Guards' family secrets

As soon as news of the massacre became public, the Secretariat of State went into "damage control mode". An emergency meeting was held in the Apostolic Palace with Mgr Sodano; Mgr Giovanni Battista, the Deputy Secretary of State; Navarro-Valls, the Pope's spokesman; and Judge Marrone, who was to be in charge of the inquiry. It took them only half an hour to decide what to say and who was to say it. Firstly, nobody wanted to reveal the failure of the Pope's security: if Tornay had been able to walk around alone with a weapon and murder the Estermann couple so easily, couldn't he have done the same with the Holy Father? The tragedy clearly revealed the inadequacy of surveillance inside the Vatican.

Next, they had to be sure that the official version would not be contested by the family. Mgr Re and the Swiss Guards' chaplain, Mgr Jehle, had to dissuade the family from coming to Rome and, if they did come nonetheless, ensure that they wouldn't rock the boat. On Sodano's instructions, Mgr Jehle got the Guards out of bed at 7 a.m., lined them up in the courtyard, and instructed them to remain calm. "He told them that in the name of their unit, they must not accuse or blame anybody within the Guard about what had happened. Nobody except for Tornay, evidently," Bertorello added.[11]

A Roman source highlighted Navarro-Valls's zeal. "The Estermanns were both close to Opus Dei. Navarro-Valls was also a member and he was remarkably quick in arriving on the scene of the crime after he'd been alerted. And the Holy Father's shadow, Dziwisz, had a reputation for supporting Opus Dei."[12] Alberto Vollmer Herrera, the Venezuelan ambassador and Gladys Meza Romero's former employer, confirmed to John Follain that the Estermanns were "friends of Opus Dei", without giving further details.

Estermann represented a prize recruit for Opus Dei. He was in a position in which he knew the Pope's state of health, the list of his meetings, and also the little and big secrets of many cardinals. Bertorello had been charged with investigating Estermann, and he recruited Tornay to discover which among the other guards were close to Opus Dei. Tornay cooperated willingly. He was one of the French-speaking minority of Swiss Guards, who were looked down upon by the German-speaking ones, and felt he was hated by Estermann since they'd broken up.

A former Swiss Guard, Steve Kellenberger, testified: “We all knew that Estermann was in Opus Dei. There was a Spanish monsignor who was a senior member of Opus Dei; he often came round to the barracks and asked for Estermann. One day they organised an outing to Villa Tevere, the headquarters of Opus Dei in Rome. Except they didn’t say it was the headquarters, they just said there’d be a barbecue at this villa. I stayed away because for me Opus Dei is like a sickness inside the Church, but lots of guards went.”[13]

To sum up, in this affair crisis communication came before a search for the truth. The Pope was only vaguely informed. A monsignor confirmed to John Follain: “His Holiness endorsed what Sodano had made up.”

What remains to be known is how Tornay, if it was him, could commit such an act. First of all, we’ll make short shrift of the idea that he was a Stasi spy who killed the Estermanns because he had been unmasked. John Follain made a counter-inquiry in East Germany and questioned former heads of the service. In the archives there were traces of an agent called “Werder” without anybody being able to say who he was exactly. Estermann was only 20 and was in a school in Switzerland when the first reports came in from the Vatican. It is more plausible that “Werder” was Eugen Brammertz, a translator for the German edition of the *L’Osservatore Romano*.

There was a more serious lead, which the Vatican never mentioned. On a simple pretext (sneaking out the previous night), Tornay had been excluded from the recipients of the three-years’ service medal (the Benemerenti) by Estermann and expelled from the Guard. He was to have received it a few days later. Such punishment would have ruined his chances from a professional point of view. At the same time, it was learnt that Estermann had been appointed to head the Swiss Guards. Nicolas Beytrison, a former Guard, commented: “Letting Tornay discover at the last minute that he wasn’t going to get his medal was typical of the kind of things the Swiss Germans did.”

Shortly before the tragedy, Tornay made a rough draft of a resignation letter. He blamed the persecution at the hands of the Swiss German Guards. On the day of the murders, he entrusted the letter, addressed to his mother, to a Guard, Claude Gugelmann, who left Rome shortly afterwards and who confided: “A short while after Tornay’s death, I spoke of the letter to Jehle. I

told him I had given my word. But Jehle went straight to Judge Marrone, the investigator, and told him everything. I was furious. Jehle shouldn't have said anything to anyone. OK, it was true that we weren't in a confessional, but for me our conversation had the same value. Jehle abused my trust. Jehle and Marrone summoned me to the office of the commandant and threatened to ransack my room if I didn't hand over the letter at once."

Another former Guard, David Tissières, who was born in the same town as Tornay and who had sworn his oath on the same day as Tornay, said much the same: "The medal meant a lot for him because he wanted to return to Switzerland holding his head high. It was pride, but it was understandable because he'd had a difficult childhood and wanted his years in Rome to be a success. He wanted to make a new start, to prove something to himself. But Estermann was always harassing him." He added: "Estermann was not the only person I'm angry with. There was also Mgr Jehle. I heard that he'd refused to meet Tornay after evening Mass, two hours before the tragedy. It didn't surprise me: Jehle was supposed to be our confidant, the person we'd go and see if we had any personal problems, but he kept an eye on us all the time. He never transmitted our demands to anyone. Tornay was also tempted to meet Cardinal Schwery, who was always friendly with us, but I don't know what happened. My feeling is that Tornay had nobody to talk to."

Apart from Opus Dei's reputation, there were two secrets that the Secretariat of State wanted to protect at all costs. The first was that there were gays among the Swiss Guards. A gay ex-officer testified that Mgr Dziwisz told him four times that he ought to get married. "Dziwisz told me that it was the only way of having a decent future in the Guard. It was his way of saying that even if I was gay, I had to show that I wasn't. I was offended. There was nothing in the rules against the promotion of unmarried officers. Imagine, celibacy is a pre-requisite for entering Holy Orders, but in the Swiss Guards they want you to marry because they're so frightened of gays […] When Estermann, who was still a bachelor, was promoted to major in 1983, the commandant told me that the Secretariat of State had ratified his promotion only on condition that he got married quickly. And in December of that year, he married Meza Romero."

The other secret was even more terrible. At the time of this affair, the Swiss Guards were effective only to a limited extent. Jo Georges, another former Guard, who had worked in the Swiss secret services, expressed his

views fully: “We were supposed to protect the Pope, but the truth is that we were just there for show. It was tradition and legend, above all; we might just as well have worked for the tourist office.” According to him, Tornay was deeply disillusioned. “Tornay did shooting training just once, in the basement. The Guards aren’t taught to put themselves in the position of an attacker, which would enable them to imagine ways of neutralising him. The Guards were not properly briefed before being deployed. And all these duties are totally useless. The Guards took up their positions, not moving a muscle for up to five hours in a row each day. We knew that after two hours of duty on guard, you were too tired to be of any use whatsoever. You couldn’t concentrate and all that you did was put the chap you were supposed to be protecting in danger.”

Today we still can’t be totally certain that Tornay suffered a breakdown and killed the Estermann couple, before committing suicide. What has been established is only that all the preconditions for such an act were met. And that the way the Secretariat of State dealt with the affair ensured that the truth would never be discovered. All in all, Cardinal Sodano by far preferred criticism to dishonour. Unfortunately for him he reaped both.

25

TWILIGHT WANDERINGS

We now know that the ends of reigns are difficult. That of John Paul II lasted almost a decade, and it sometimes gave the impression of a ship drifting. At the beginning of the 2000s, a monsignor confided to John Follain that the pope was so ill that he had become the “Curia’s prisoner”. He had undergone five operations since the attempt on his life in 1981. He was taking a course of medication for Parkinson’s disease called Levodopa. The side effects made him feel great at one moment, then devastated the next. But the Holy Father had to appear to be in command. According to a saying in the Vatican, popes are never ill; they’re just content to die one day. So Dziwisz, his secretary, did all he could for John Paul II so that he seemed to be in control of the situation, but that was not really so.[1]

What is striking is how much the secret war machine set up in the first decade of John Paul II’s pontificate was subsequently dismantled. Most of the priests mobilised at the time had returned to their official duties, as if the collapse of communism heralded the “end of history” (to quote Francis Fukuyama). The know-how acquired in Eastern Europe had not been put to use nor reinvested in other areas. In the preceding chapters we have seen how the Curia lacked reliable information, or simply made bad use of what it received. These failures of the Vatican’s intelligence were nowhere more

conspicuous than in two of the most devastating affairs which marked the 1990s.

A Mexican in Jersey

The North American Church paedophilia scandal is fairly well known and need not detain us too long. As early as 1984 a priest in Louisiana, Gilbert Gauthe, was arrested for the sexual abuse of children. On the basis of this incident, a local journalist, Jason Berry, highlighted a structural problem in the Church which went far beyond Louisiana. In 1992, he published a large study, ten years before the subject made the headlines in the national press.[2] In February 2004, a report by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York, made with the cooperation of the United States Bishops' Conference, concluded that there had been at least one case of child abuse by a priest in 95% of all American dioceses since 1950. The report pointed out that a large number of abusing priests had themselves been abused when children and that some of them suffered from alcoholism or untreated psychological problems. Instead of being treated medically, they were only offered a "spiritual follow-up". The cruellest point the report made was that the American Church had spent more money in lawyers' fees defending itself rather than treating the problems of the failing priests over the previous fifty years.

In March 1993, a delegation of American bishops was met by John Paul II in the Vatican. They had come to ask for greater autonomy in getting rid of paedophile priests. The Pope answered: "My dear bishops, I have lived all these years under communism. I'm not going to let *that* enter the Church." In his answer, John Paul II likened the accelerated procedure which the bishops were asking for to the contempt the totalitarian regimes had for priests' rights. The Vatican specialist Jacek Moskwa, in an interview with Frédéric Martel,[3] explained the psychological block the Pope had on this subject: "Don't forget the context: before 1989, rumours of homosexuality and of paedophilia were often used by the Polish secret services to discredit opponents of the regime. As they were used to blackmail and political manipulation, John Paul II and his assistant Dziwisz never wanted to believe any of these rumours. Their mentality was that of a

besieged fortress: the Church's enemies were trying to compromise priests. They had to show they stood together, whatever the cost."

What was more, the Pope considered paedophiliac acts as sins, not as crimes. This approach, of considering paedophile acts as moral faults, was shared by many bishops and can only partly explain the tardiness in dealing with the problem.[4] As he hadn't any contact with the victims, John Paul II didn't take into account their point of view sufficiently. His defenders[5] explained that it was all the fault of the American bishops, who had done too little too late, and who hadn't informed him properly. This position doesn't hold water. If he'd been given incorrect information, it was the Pope's immediate assistants who have to be blamed for screening the reports.

The most telling example was that of the allegations made against the founding father of the Legion of Christ, Marcial Maciel Degollado. The importance that Maciel had within the Catholic Church was demonstrated on the occasion of John Paul II's first trip to Mexico. In 1979, the Mexican president, José López Portillo, may have been an atheist and even anti-clerical, but he spoke very highly of Maciel. It must be said that his two sisters worked in Regnum Christi, the lay organisation of the Legion of Christ. One of them was even Maciel's private secretary. Like the Legionaries of the time, they worshipped the founder of the movement. Maciel thus became a habitué of presidential receptions. This relationship enabled him to prepare the Pope's visit in the best possible way. The media consortium Televisa, which was owned by a friend of Maciel, ensured that the visit would receive media coverage throughout South America as if it were an apotheosis.

With this triumphal visit, Maciel won John Paul II's eternal gratitude. The Pope returned to Mexico four times and Maciel was his trusted man in all matters to do with the region. A few months after his first trip, John Paul II celebrated a Mass in the gardens of the Vatican for the Legionaries, a rare privilege and a signal to please the Curia.

It must be said that the Legionaries of Christ were superbly organised and deeply rooted throughout South America. Maciel was on good terms with the continent's conservative elites, who saw in his movement a pillar of social order and a valuable anti-communist force. The congregation

developed at a steady pace, opened schools, seminaries and universities, while other orders lost numbers. This didn’t go unnoticed.

This success was the work of a lifetime, which nonetheless concealed a lot of grey areas. Marcial Maciel Degollado was born in March 1920 into a family of fervent Mexican Catholics involved in the struggle of the Church against a state which had become violently anti-clerical with the revolution of the 1910s. These religious persecutions ended in an armed uprising by part of the population in 1926. This was the Cristero rebellion. Thus Maciel grew up in a Mexico that was fighting a civil war, within a very committed family; he wanted very early on to become a priest. He was sent down from his seminary twice. He later gave explanations that were just as fanciful as they were convenient. The truth, later established by Jason Berry and Gerald Renner, was that in the 1940s Maciel was found guilty of sexually abusing children.[6]

With protection from a prelate who was a relation, he was able to enter a seminary again. He was even allowed to create a congregation despite not being ordained, which was against canonical law. It was in Tlalpan to the south of Mexico City that he founded the Legionaries. He quickly showed an exceptional talent for raising funds and charming the upper middle classes. Leading families saw it as prestigious to send a son to the seminary. Many young recruits were abused by Maciel, their spiritual father, and it took decades to bring their complaints before the pope.

Maciel was not only attracted to young boys. In 1956, an apostolic visitor from the Vatican, Father Ballestrero, investigated the congregation at length. He was struck by the *omertà* surrounding Maciel: members of the congregation were forbidden to speak to anybody, even those sent by the Vatican. When Maciel was sent to a Roman clinic, nobody said why. It took a surprise visit by a cardinal, Valerio Valeri, to discover that Maciel was being treated for drug abuse. He obtained morphine-based medicines for himself by sending seminarians to buy some abroad without a prescription.[7] Cardinal Valeri decided to suspend Maciel and send him to be detoxified.

But Father Ballestrero’s investigation and Cardinal Valeri’s decision were very quickly challenged by reports from several doctors appointed by the Legionaries of Christ. Further apostolic visitors were dispatched by the Vatican and came to very indulgent conclusions. Shortly after the death of

Pius XII, in the interregnum between two pontificates, Maciel was restored to his duties.[8]

Maciel now redoubled his efforts to expand his congregation. In addition to the vows common to all the orders, the Legionaries observed two that were peculiar to them alone: never speak ill of the founder and the leaders of the order, and denounce all those who criticised them, both inside and outside the order. This was tantamount to making spying the Legionaries' basic activity. In 1965, Maciel obtained a decree of recognition from Paul VI, which allowed him to be attached to the Vatican and no longer depend on the Mexican hierarchy. From there he developed the Regnum Christi movement. From then on Maciel lived in luxury, spent more time travelling and led several well-separated lives. In the 1970s he got married twice, using false names, in Mexico and in Spain. To justify his family absences, he claimed he was a secret agent. To the Legion's leaders, he explained that he was going on top-secret missions to the Eastern bloc countries for the pope, but nobody was to know. All this only increased his aura.

Maciel's empire included fifteen universities and several hundred colleges and training centres. When they entered the congregation, members had to hand over most of their possessions to the institution and undertook to bequeath their worldly goods to it. A number of wealthy men became sponsors of the Legionaries, like the Mexican telecom magnate, Carlos Slim. A holding company, Integer, headed the group's activities. Its assets were managed by a Luxembourg bank, their value estimated at between 20 and 35 billion euros. John Paul II saw the Legionaries as a quasi-military order, capable of countering the ascendancy of the Evangelical churches on the Latin American continent—the instruments of a Catholic restoration.

Opus Dei and the Legion of Christ represented a traditionalist and anti-communist current in Catholicism. Both had a huge capacity for raising large funds and knew how to woo the powerful and the rich.

In the 2010s, the French DGSE was able to reconstruct a network of 200 institutions belonging to the Legionaries, dispersed over several tax havens. Maxime Renahy was at the heart of this investigation. He was a young Frenchman who worked as a fund manager in Jersey, a centre for the financial management of companies who wish to avoid paying tax. Renahy

offered his services to the French secret services as a voluntary informer. From his revelations, we learn that the Legionaries of Christ managed their assets through Jersey. At the end of the 1940s, a lay wing, Regnum Christi, was set up whose aim was to establish “the reign of Christ in society”; they built schools and universities in twenty or so countries. These schools and universities had an operational budget of $650 million a year.

The DGSE agent discovered about 200 interlinked companies, “which, on the principle of Russian dolls, fitted together one inside the other in Jersey, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Panama and the Bahamas”.[9] At the end of 2017, the leaks disclosed by the “Paradise Papers” confirmed the presence of the Legionaries of Christ and of Marcial Degollado in these tax havens.

In 1992, there was a meeting of the Fourth General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Santo Domingo. The gathering preoccupied the Pope, who was waiting to see if its proceedings would confirm the decline of the theology of the liberation. Maciel took control of things: each prelate would be assisted by a young secretary, appointed by the Legion. The tasks of these secretaries were to spy on the delegates and send a report on their activities each evening, the people they met and the opinions they expressed in private. Maciel thus developed an espionage tool in real time.

The storm broke in 1997 when eight former seminarians from the Legion, victims of sexual abuse by Maciel, wrote to John Paul II. Their letter was transmitted to the Vatican by the nuncio in Mexico but it didn’t reach the hands of the Pope. It ended up by being published by an American daily, the *Hartford Courant*.[10] A swarm of lawyers from the Legion went into action to dissuade anybody from spreading these accusations or from investigating them. A consultant in communications was recruited to discredit the accusers. The Mexican Catholic hierarchy united around Maciel.

But the situation evolved nonetheless. Following the avalanche of paedophile scandals in the American Church, John Paul II in May 2001 signed a *motu proprio* which determined that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, directed by Joseph Ratzinger, had exclusive competence in these matters. This decree was made two months after an investigation by the *National Catholic Reporter* revealed that priests had abused African nuns, whom they used for their sexual desires but also

encouraged to abort. The Curia had ignored five reports sent earlier by the nuns' superiors.

According to the evidence, Ratzinger, when asked about the Maciel affair, thought it was serious but "very delicate", Father Maciel being "a friend of the Holy Father". Maciel had secured everything, reported the journalist Franca Giansoldati; "he had excellent relations with the Pope's secretary, Stanisław Dziwisz, with the Polish cardinal Andrzej Deskur, with Cardinal Eduardo Martínez Somalo, with Mgr Ryłko, with the Mexican cardinal Barragán, with the powerful deputy of the Secretariat of State, the Argentine Leonardo Sandri, today a cardinal. And above all, Angelo Sodano, the Secretary of State of the time, occupied a very special place in the circle of his defenders. He had known Maciel when he was the apostolic nuncio in Santiago during Pinochet's terrible dictatorship."

In 2004, although the paedophile cases in the Church filled the newspapers and the press across the world published the accusations against Maciel, he was given permission to celebrate the 60th anniversary of his ordination in great pomp in the presence of the Pope. The Pope was at the time greatly afflicted by Parkinson's disease and was living out his last months. At that moment, Ratzinger decided to make progress with the case: the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith appointed its "promoter of justice", Cardinal Charles Scicluna, to prepare the Maciel case for judgement. His investigation started during the final weeks of John Paul II's episcopate and ended under a new pope. Benedict XVI gave him extra support by authorising him to access the Vatican archives, a quite exceptional measure which ended in a damning report.

However, to everyone's surprise, the sentence given in 2006 was very mild: it was decided to take into account Maciel's advanced age and frail health and to abandon the idea of a fully fledged canonical trial. Maciel was simply invited to lead a retired life of prayer and penitence, and to renounce any public ministry. This didn't prevent Maciel from carrying on with his travelling between several homes. He died in 2008. On his death, his Spanish wife and his daughter turned up at the funeral and claimed their part of the inheritance. A financial settlement was reached with the Legion, and the wife and daughter returned to Spain. It was quite different with Maciel's Mexican family. One of the sons claimed during a press conference that he and his little brother had suffered sexual abuse by their father. And several dozen priests from the congregation were in turn

accused of abuse. The accusations against the Legion started to accumulate, tarnishing its image even more and sowing division within it. Some frightened sponsors put an end to their contributions. In 2010, Benedict XVI set up an express procedure for cases of sexual abuse, enabling priests to be reduced to lay status in more serious cases.

In 2010, the heads of the Legion decided to disavow their founder: for the first time, they sent out a communiqué acknowledging that paedophile acts had been committed and offered their apologies to the victims. The moment was not chosen by chance: at the same time the Pope was given a report on the findings made following an "apostolic visit". Serious consideration was given to disbanding the order, but the Pope finally decided to put the Legionaries under supervision. The question was all the more prickly in that disbanding the order would be the same as accusing John Paul II directly,[11] not to mention that several Curia members seemed to have benefited from Maciel's financial largesse.

According to the American journalist Jason Berry,[12] young Legionaries regularly visited certain Curia heads of department to hand them fat envelopes in person. During South American episcopal conferences, participants also received "donations". Both Ratzinger and Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the future Pope Francis, told their entourage that they'd refused Maciel's envelopes. In 2020, the Polish television channel TVN 24 presented a documentary about Cardinal Dziwisz, aged 81 at the time. In *Don Stanisław: The Hidden Side of Cardinal Dziwisz*, the claim was made, supported by documents, that Dziwisz had been involved in hushing up the sexual scandals and might even have received bribes.[13] Dziwisz himself declared to the Italian press agency Ansa: "Never, I repeat, never, have I accepted money for hiding facts that needed the attention of the Holy Father. Never have I supported contemptible people in exchange for money."

The most serious accusations in the documentary were made by Jason Berry. Dziwisz didn't think it a good idea to react to these accusations, let alone sue Berry for libel. Here are the key elements, presented by Berry himself in an article from 2013.

> The Legionaries had a history of channeling money to Dziwisz to arrange guests at the papal Masses. The Legion hosted a lavish reception in Rome when Dziwisz became a cardinal in March 2006. Two months later, as Pope Benedict, Ratzinger dismissed Maciel to a "life of

> prayer and penitence". In 2010, when I was on assignment for *National Catholic Reporter*, two priests who had left the Legion gave me a deep look at the order's dealings with Dziwisz. One priest recounted that he arranged for a Mexican Legion benefactor to give Dziwisz $50 000 so his family could attend Mass in the chapel of the Apostolic Palace.[14]

We now know that Mgr Dziwisz had been accustomed, at least until 1989, to handling large amounts of money in cash, which he gave out in envelopes to the Pope's secret emissaries leaving for Poland. He had also been aware of donations made directly to the Pope by important Catholic families, either for a charitable purpose or for the fight against communism. It would be quite surprising if the charitable donations stopped after 1989. And one doesn't see why it would be embarrassing to acknowledge having received cash donations if one could justify the charitable uses they were put to.

Rwanda: The shattered honour of the Church

The Church's involvement in the Rwanda genocide, which is still not very well known to a majority of Catholics, didn't make the headlines in the international press as much as the paedophiliac scandals did. But all throughout Africa it had a devastating effect, which led Pope Francis to make a quite exceptional act of contrition in 2017.

The first Belgian missionaries arrived in Rwanda in 1900.[15] During Rwanda's six decades of colonial rule, the White Fathers endeavoured to build an alliance between the Church and the ruling classes. This involved Catholic missionaries in moving from a belief in the natural superiority of the Tutsis towards increasingly supporting the Hutus and helping them accede to power at the end of the colonial period.

The Church's role in creating Hutu nationalism in turn sparked off a wave of conversions among the Hutus. When the latter came to power after independence in 1962, the Catholic authorities possessed an entrée to the highest political circles in the country. Several leaders in the first republic, like President Kayibanda, were protégés of the Church. In 1973, there was a military *coup d'état*. The new president, Juvénal Habyarimana, declared himself a fervent Catholic and developed close links between his regime and the Church that supported him. Between 1990 and 1992, military and diplomatic pressures obliged the government to undertake reforms. The

regime sought to develop the economy and attract investors. But by 1992 Habyarimana was on the defensive. Outside the country's borders, Paul Kagame's Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) was becoming daily more and more threatening. Internal opposition coalesced. Church leaders feared they'd lose their influence and supported the scapegoat policy adopted by the political elite to keep themselves in power: accusing the Tutsis of all the country's ills. It was this policy that was to lead to the genocide.

In February 1993, the RPF invaded the north of the country and thereby unleashed political violence in the society. The death of President Habyarimana in an aeroplane crash on 6 April 1994 served as a pretext for the military leaders to attack any opposition to the regime. Leaders of the opposition, human rights activists and journalists were all killed. In the following weeks, violence erupted all over the country, in particular against the Tutsi minority. More than a tenth of the population was massacred in only three months. The clergy were not spared: the archbishop of Kigali, two bishops, a hundred priests, and sixty or so nuns were massacred at the same time as 200 000 Rwandans. The country was plunged into chaos and became the scene of a genocide unique in African history. Although the lines of division were racial, not religious, the historian Doris Bergen believes that "Christianity had played a critical role, perhaps not as a motivation for the deciders, but to make their orders understandable and acceptable". In brief, the Church had been an agency of legitimation. As a respected moral authority, and a big employer in the Rwandan economy, the Church would no doubt not have been able to stop the atrocities, but it could have condemned the massacres morally. This it did not do.

In a message broadcast in 1996, John Paul II claimed that "the Church could not be held responsible for the guilt of its members who acted against the law of the Gospels". Of course, some members of the clergy showed great courage and risked their lives to save Tutsis. But the Rwandan Church as an institution clearly failed. According to an investigation made by the Catholic magazine *Golias*,[16] the Italian White Father Bérôme Carlisquia, who had taken part in the initial massacres in 1959, took part again in the 1994 killings. A year after the genocide, Mgr Phocas Nikwigize, the Bishop of Ruhengeri from 1968 to 1996, declared in the Flemish newspaper *De Volkskrant*: "A Hutu is simple and upright but a Tutsi is wily and hypocritical. He presents well, is polite and charming, but when the

moment comes, he rushes at you. A Tutsi is basically evil, not by education but by nature."[17]

The *Bulletin d'information africaine des Pères Blancs* explained the "bad press" that the genocide had had: "The Tutsi have succeeded in submitting themselves to all the international organisations and establishing cells there, even the press and Radio Vatican […] where they have been able to place Rwandan Tutsi abbots […] who distorted all the information with extraordinary skill, craftsmen of deception, deceitful people and masters of intrigue. Attractive Rwandan Tutsi girls have infiltrated the humanitarian organisations and conquered the terrain with their unique physical charms."[18]

Even before the end of the genocide, a number of Hutu priests wrote to Rome to say that there were in fact two genocides: according to them, the Tutsis massacred even more Hutus than the other way round. However, the Belgian courts were able to make clear findings in several cases without difficulty. Two Benedictine nuns from Sovu, Gertrude, the Mother Superior, and Sister Maria Kizito, were sentenced by the Belgian courts for having handed over 7 000 refugees who had sought asylum in their convent to the assassins. The head of ethnic cleansing operations in Sovu testified that Sister Kizito herself set fire to a building in which Tutsi families had sought refuge by pouring petrol over it. The Vatican spokesman, Navarro-Valls, thought he ought to deplore the fact that the sisters were being judged "so far from Rwanda". Other nuns simply left their Tutsi sisters to the rapists and killers.

Athanase Seromba, the parish priest of Nyangwe, caused 2 000 Tutsi refugees to be buried in his church by having it demolished by bulldozers. He himself finished off the wounded in the ruins. Between 1997 and 2002, he resumed his pastoral duties near Florence in Italy before being accused by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Probably under pressure from the Vatican, Italy refused to arrest him at the request of the ICC. Seromba agreed to give himself up the following year. In 2006 he was sentenced to fifteen years in prison, a sentence that was extended on appeal to life imprisonment. Other priests who were complicit in the genocide found refuge in Italy, France and Belgium, where they continued to exercise their profession or found a peaceful retirement. The NGO African Rights sent

John Paul II several reports on the criminal priests in Rwanda, but they received no reply.

In the years after the genocide, the White Fathers tried by all means to prove that the priests and nuns involved in the genocide were innocent. The Belgian Father André Comblin went twice to Sovu convent to try to get the sisters to retract their allegations against Mother Superior Gertrude and Sister Maria Kizito. This episode was not isolated. In 2001 Carla Del Ponte, a prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, investigated four Rwandans accused of complicity in genocide, two of whom were priests. One of them lived in Italy under a false name. In her memoirs,[19] the Swiss prosecutor recalled an incident which made her, “to put it mildly, furious”. When she asked the Vatican to help her persuade a Rwandan priest to hand himself over to the authorities, he was sent elsewhere to hide.

The same scene was played out again a few years later. When she met Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, the Secretary for Relations with States, the prosecutor informed him that a Croatian war criminal, a general, was hiding, according to her information, in a Franciscan monastery and that she needed his help to overcome the resistance from the Conference of Croatian Bishops, which seemed to be taking the side of the general. Lajolo replied that he had no authority over the bishops. The affair turned into a media nightmare: “The Vatican accused of sheltering war criminals,” declared the *Daily Telegraph* on 20 September 2005. A Vatican spokesman replied that Del Ponte had not given precise enough information and that, anyway, she had asked the wrong department. The controversy finally ended that December when the general was arrested in Spain. It seems that the information about his presence in the Croatian monastery was incorrect, which makes the Curia’s attitude even more incomprehensible.

Until the civil war broke out, Rwanda was thought to be one of the most Christian countries in Africa. The Hutus formed 80% of the population, but half the Catholic clergy were Tutsis. The genocide provoked a crisis of confidence in the Rwandan Church. It is thought that it lost about a third of its faithful, mostly to the Protestant churches.

Many religious leaders have since then tried to promote a “theology of reconciliation”. For his part, President Kagame decreed a “national policy of reconciliation”. It wasn’t before 2016 that the Conference of Bishops asked for forgiveness for the role played by some of its members. This letter

didn’t satisfy the Rwandan president, who believed that it was up to the Vatican to ask for forgiveness. In March 2017, Pope Francis met the Rwandan president, Paul Kagame, in the Vatican. He implored “the forgiveness of God” for the sins of the Church and its members during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. One can detect a certain Jesuitical subtlety, which avoided questioning the role of the Vatican and of the Curia, and gave the Catholic Church a central role in Rwandan society. In November 2020, Pope Francis sent a further signal by appointing as Archbishop of Kigali Cardinal Antoine Kambanda, who was very much involved in the “theology of reconciliation”.

It will probably never be possible to determine to what extent responsibility for the Rwandan tragedy can be laid at the door of the Vatican. The health of the Pope in 1994 was not such that he could be exonerated from any responsibility. He also didn’t have enough knowledge of Africa to be the only person held responsible. But one thing is clear: this tragedy was also, and perhaps above all, a failure of intelligence. The Secretariat of State visibly let itself be influenced by the lobbying of the White Fathers and the biased reports of the Rwandan hierarchy, without taking account of any independent sources (unless these were ignored). To this was added the old reflex of “damage control” and of running away in the face of responsibility. Indeed, the genocide would have happened anyway even if it had been condemned by the Vatican. Indeed, we are far from being able to reach a solid and definitive conclusion about the responsibilities of all the powers that were involved. Even if Pope Francis knew how to find a way of healing, it behoves both the present and future popes to consider more carefully the ways and means of obtaining reliable intelligence about the world’s hotspots.

V

RATZINGER AND BERGOGLIO

26

THE IMPOSSIBLE INHERITANCE

> “We don’t understand the Curia. Nobody understands the Curia.”
>
> Cardinal Jozef Tomko

Who would succeed Wojtyła? The question had been in everybody’s mind in the Vatican for months, if not years. A telegram sent by the American Embassy in the Vatican to the American State Department (later revealed by Wikileaks), dated 18 April 2005, stated:[1]

> On the eve of the papal election, no single candidate had emerged as a clear frontrunner. Despite a week of media speculation suggesting that German cardinal and close John Paul II collaborator, Joseph Ratzinger, was moving close to a majority of votes, it appears that he lacks enough support to achieve the required two-thirds, given strong opposition from factions that see Ratzinger as too rigid and jealous of Rome’s prerogatives.
>
> Some of these forces appear to be uniting around retired Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini,[2] though he is not expected to be a viable candidate. Based on these initial showings, the cardinals in subsequent votes are expected to shift to other candidates who reflect the Ratzinger or Martini views, but who offer better hope of garnering support from other groups. The Italian Cardinals Ruini or Scola and Argentinian Cardinal Bergoglio would be suitable to the Ratzinger camp, while Milan’s Archbishop

> Cardinal Tettamanzi or Brazilian Cardinal Hummes could pull the support of the anti-Ratzinger groups.[3]

It is difficult to be so badly mistaken. A message dated the next day averred that the diplomats based in Rome were left "speechless" by Ratzinger's election. Another wire[4] presented Ratzinger as a doctrinal conservative in religious matters, lacking in political sense and too old to acquire any. Consequently, the author thought, Benedict would have trouble in controlling the Curia (with hindsight, this was not a poor prediction). A later message indicated that Pope Benedict XVI avoided difficult decisions but refused to delegate.

Who was Benedict running for?

Other secret services had a more surprising analysis: "Joseph Ratzinger is the BND's man."[5] In this view, the German secret service had some reason to be happy with this election. Observers noted that the new pope had been Bishop of Munich, where the German foreign intelligence agency's headquarters were located. And his arrival in the Vatican in 1981 coincided with the increasing role played by the German federal intelligence service in the foreign policies of the Vatican. "In 1981, following the assassination attempt on John Paul II, the BND became one of the most sought after of the major services, because of the information it supplied about the Turkish Grey Wolves and the complex Bulgarian web behind the attempt. Camillo Cibin, head of papal security, was not the only person whose job was to liaise with the West German service. Father Bruno Fink, at the time Mgr Ratzinger's secretary and factotum, provided contacts with his German compatriots," as the confidential letter *Intelligence Online* reported. "In 1982, when Ronald Reagan and John Paul II organised operations in support of the Solidarity trade union in Poland, the BND played a supporting role thanks to its intelligence networks which worked under cover of humanitarian organisations. Shortly afterwards, Günter Haendly, the personal secretary of Klaus Kinkel, the head of the BND, was sent to Rome after a period in Paris, where he had liaised directly with the DGSE's Admiral Pierre Lacoste. While Günter Haendly was resident in Rome—until 1986—the BND set up an outfit within the Vatican City itself to

facilitate cooperation in Eastern Europe. A political intelligence specialist, Günter Haendly was once again resident in Rome in 1994, at a time when, thanks to Ratzinger's team, the BND pursued normal intelligence operations in the Balkans. This new Ostpolitik had been started in 1991 by the previous resident, Arnd Garpengeter, and was directed at Croatia, then Bosnia and Kosovo." Indeed, with this last operation, one could see that the views of the Vatican and the German services were similar.

Nonetheless, this alliance must not be taken for what it wasn't. For the Vatican it was a fairly traditional way of working, in which the links with a particular Western service were delegated to a prelate from the country in question. This made it possible to establish a subtle complicity, an atmosphere of mutual friendship and of trust. But it didn't mean, or only rarely, that the prelate in question became an agent of the secret service, or that he shaped the Vatican's policy on his own. At most, a certain kind of partiality was to be observed in the way in which information supplied by the service was handled. Finally, one must not forget the important part unified Germany played in the Vatican's geopolitics and economy. Directly or indirectly, the German faithful were important contributors to the Vatican's budget and to various international Catholic organisations.

Skeletons in the cupboards

As the likely successor to John Paul II and someone familiar with the Vatican's secrets, Benedict seemed able to be get down to work quite quickly and avoid the numerous pitfalls. He surrounded himself with well-known colleagues. His private secretary, Mgr Georg Gänswein, jealously guarded access to the Pope's apartments. He was a sort of son for Ratzinger. Young and handsome, he made people jealous by appearing on the front cover of the Italian edition of *Vanity Fair*, like a cinema star.

Secretary of State Angelo Sodano was 75 when Ratzinger became pope. From 2000 to 2005 he became a sort of "vice-pope", running the political apparatus all-powerfully. Benedict kept him in his position for a year before replacing him, to everyone's surprise, with Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone of Genoa. While he had no diplomatic experience, spoke no foreign languages and knew nothing about the Curia, Bertone's main quality was the trust the Pope had in him. He had been Ratzinger's assistant in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for seven years. Before leaving his post, Sodano

had time to appoint his secretary, Mgr Piero Pioppo, as ecclesiastical supervisor of the IOR. Caloia's term of office at the head of the bank was renewed for five years.

Bertone had a lot of trouble taking control. For a while, Sodano refused to leave his office. The Secretariat's personnel stood by him. It was then that Bertone started to call in the papal police. He had them check that his office was not being bugged. The result was damning: microphones had been placed almost everywhere in Saint John's Tower. The telephones were tapped. Everything had to be searched with a fine toothcomb. Bertone also had to dismiss the drivers who had been put at his disposal, since they reported everything he did to Cardinal Sodano. One would think that they were all back in the 1980s when the world's secret services were trying to listen in on John Paul II, except that this time the spies were inside the Church. As a result Bertone developed a real paranoia, which made his enemies compare him to "a branch of the KGB", a "real oppressive totalitarian system controlling the souls and the bedrooms", as Frédéric Martel reported. He was nicknamed the Vatican's Hoover, in a reference to the FBI boss who spent his life accumulating compromising files on the private lives of powerful Americans. As Secretary of State, Bertone applied the methods developed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. "According to several sources, when Bertone arrived, an internal control system was set up consisting of profiles, card indexes and monitoring, a whole chain of command, with him at the top, to protect the secrets of the Vatican."[6]

To do this, Bertone relied upon the new police boss, Domenico Giani, who was a former officer of the Italian Financial Guard and of the Italian secret services. He started to reform the gendarmerie completely, providing it with up-to-date equipment and technology. He also set up the GIR (Gruppo Intervento Rapido, or rapid intervention group), based on other European intervention groups. According to several observers, he set up a real "parallel police force" with the Secretary's support. Nicolas Diat reported that "there were many cardinals who felt they were being watched and bugged by Domenico Giani's fearsome officers. From 7 October 2008, although the Vatican City State was a member of Interpol, the security within the micro-territory made it appear like a besieged fortress. Hundreds of surveillance cameras were installed at every corner of the Vatican. The best-informed prelates thought it was no longer possible to make a move

without the police's control rooms knowing all about it. It wasn't rare for a cardinal or a bishop living in the Vatican to prefer to welcome a friend in a restaurant in central Rome rather than being watched by Domenico Giani's surveillance men. Every week, he handed a report to Cardinal Bertone."[7]

According to the former priest Francesco Lepore, interviewed by Frédéric Martel, "all means of communication, telephones and computers were closely controlled and screened by the Vatican. They therefore knew everything that was going on in the Holy See and, if necessary, they had evidence against those who might cause problems. The computers, submitted to real 'parental control', were programmed to block access to sites considered undesirable and trigger a warning message. Browsing histories were kept and could be brought out again if needed. As a result, many prelates took to using private telephones and encrypted communication systems like Signal or Telegram."

Giani's services were also used to carry out investigations outside the Vatican, which was nothing new. What was new was that Giani seemed to control most of the functions dealing with intelligence himself, whereas, under the previous popes, these were usually dispersed. He therefore became the person the European secret services talked to, whereas this liaison work had been traditionally shared out among several cardinals in the Curia. Many thought that Giani was closely interested in the prelates' private lives, seeking to discover who led a homosexual life outside the Vatican.

For all that, the Vatican's investment in intelligence did not avoid embarrassing situations for the Pope. When Cardinal Glemp, the former Primate of Poland, died in 2013, Benedict XVI chose Archbishop Wielgus to replace him. But a few days later the *Gazeta Polska* claimed that Wielgus was a former informer for the Polish SB. Wielgus defended himself, denying that he had ever given the slightest information and stating that he had told Benedict XVI everything. The Vatican published a communiqué confirming its confidence in him.

All SB files concerning priests were supposed to have been destroyed; but this did not take account of microfilm copies which the Institute of National Remembrance got hold of. The situation became like that of the Stasi archives. Wielgus's complete file (code name "Gris") turned out to be very embarrassing. In these grave circumstances, Benedict XVI had no

choice but to cancel Wielgus's appointment and Wielgus was forced to resign. Then the revelations started pouring out.

Father Janus Bielański, dean of Wawel Cathedral in Cracow, resigned after his past as an informer was revealed. He was close to Stanisław Dziwisz. Another priest from the Archdiocese of Cracow, directed by Dziwisz, had to resign: Mieczyslaw Łukaszczyk. He admitted he'd been in contact with the SB but denied cooperating with them. Another person close to Dziwisz, Father Miroslaw Drozdek, the guardian of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Fatima in Zakopane, turned out to have collaborated with the secret services. A final case concerned a priest who had been close to John Paul II ever since 1940. Father Mieczyslaw Maliński was recruited by the SB in 1980, with the code name "Delta". With Wojtyła, he was a member of a clandestine seminary during the war. He'd become a Catholic journalist and the author of the first Polish biography of John Paul II. In February 2007, a book by Father Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, *Priests Confronting the Secret Services*, revealed the names of twenty priests and four bishops who had been SB spies.

The time for internecine war

In July 2009, the publication of a papal encyclical on capitalism's excesses coincided with the appearance of Gianluigi Nuzzi's book *Vaticano, S.p.A.* (Vatican and Co.), which revealed the IOR's embarrassing state of affairs. This book would have been impossible to write without the journalist's principal source, Mgr Renato Dardozzi, who died in 2003. From being the IOR's saviour, in a few days Caloia became suspect. On 23 September, the Secretariat of State announced his resignation. The bank's new manager was Ettore Gotti Tedeschi, an Italian economist, an Opus Dei member and the head of Italian operations for the Spanish bank Santander. He juggled both jobs.

Gotti Tedeschi began his work in troubled times. In December 2000, the Vatican finally signed a convention with the European Union giving it the right to issue its own euro money. But Brussels wanted the Vatican to respect European financial standards as regards the fight against money laundering, terrorism, fraud and counterfeiting. Several veterans of the IOR thought they would be able to ignore the rules, but Gotti Tedeschi put all his weight behind the initiative. However, it was not possible to leave the euro.

A new, more restrictive convention was therefore signed three months after he started his new job. But it had to be respected. In the summer of 2010, Brussels called on the Italian Central Bank to strengthen its checks on the IOR. The Bank of Italy sent a circular to all Italian banks in which it defined precisely the regulations that were to be followed in their dealings with the Vatican Bank. The circular reminded them that the Vatican was not on the Organisation of European Co-operation and Development's list of states cooperating in matters financial.

In September, Italian prosecutors froze $30 million worth of assets in the IOR account with the Credito Artigiano of Rome, thus blocking a transfer to JP Morgan in Frankfurt. Following procedures, the Italian bank asked the IOR who the account holder was and the reason for the transfer, without getting a reply. The Italian service for processing financial intelligence, Tracfin, then went to court. A few months later, the prosecutors inquired about cash withdrawals from IOR accounts with the Italian banks for an amount of $1.3 million.

In an unrelated investigation in Sicily, six people were arrested for laundering money, among whom was an Italian priest who helped his father to launder $350 000 through the IOR (this had to do with recycling a European subsidy for developing a pisciculture farm, which didn't exist).[8] In Brussels there was much annoyance that the IOR was being used as a financial cover for organised crime. Just like Caloia before him, Gotti Tedeschi seemed to have all the trouble in the world taking control of the institution he was supposed to direct. He decided to get in touch with the FATF (Financial Action Task Force), which was set up by the G7 countries. He agreed to observe its standards and submit to the control of experts from Moneyval, the European group assessing financial compliance as part of the fight against money laundering and terrorism. It was a bold commitment and tantamount to abandoning part of the state's sovereignty. Some prelates tried to oppose it, but the Pope came down on Tedeschi's side and proclaimed the first anti-laundering decree in Vatican history on 30 December. He created the first financial control authority, the AIF (Autorità di Informazione Finanziaria), with an ecclesiastical chairman and a lay manager, with all the powers needed to investigate both the IOR and the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See (APSA, or the Governorate). The AIF was entirely independent and was accountable to nobody save the pope. The agreement made between the IOR and

Moneyval made it possible to unblock the $30 million in the Credito Artigiano.

In May 2011, Bertone asked Gotti Tedeschi to make an offer of $260 million so as to obtain a majority holding in the San Raffaele Hospital in Milan, which had been founded by a priest friend of Silvio Berlusconi. When the books were audited, several millions of overdue debts were discovered. In October, the administrator of the hospital committed suicide in his office. On the suspicion of fraud, Gotti Tedeschi decided to disobey Bertone.

A large number of prelates asked Benedict to dismiss Bertone. The Superior General of the Jesuits, in a letter to the Pope, denounced the climate of fear in the Vatican. Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, the deputy governor of the Vatican City, was appointed nuncio in Washington by Bertone. Although this was an exalted position, Viganò felt he'd been punished for having called into question the positions that companies supplying the Vatican had acquired by means of nepotism or corruption. Meeting the Pope in a private audience, Viganò handed him a memo giving details of the "state of corruption" he had found when taking up his duties and what he had done to set the situation straight. He denounced the practice of contracting work to the same companies which sent in invoices for twice the normal price. He warned Benedict that Vatican State investments were made under the direction of a group of Italian bankers "who placed their interests above ours".

One evening at the end of 2011, a group of prelates met secretly in the Roman apartment of one of the Pope's advisors.[9] They believed that the Pope showed his goodwill where reform was concerned, but that his hands were tied by his Secretary of State, who decided the Pope's appointments and audiences almost by himself. They also deplored the omnipotence of what they called the "gay lobby" of prelates who promoted ambitious young priests in exchange for favours. The group decided on Bertone's fall by putting pressure on the Pope's major-domo, Paolo Gabriele. Living in the Vatican, serving the Pope from dawn to dusk seven days a week, and accompanying him when he went abroad, Gabriele was a discreet but omnipresent figure. Every Thursday, in an empty Rome apartment, Nuzzi met Gabriele and exchanged documents. The journalist scanned them and stored them on a USB stick which he wore around his neck all the time in case he or his office was searched.

Nuzzi condensed the material from the end of January 2012 onwards in the daily newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano* and in a TV programme, *Gli intoccabili* (The Untouchables), before bringing out a book entitled *His Holiness*. The media soon talked of a "Vatileaks". The Vatican's priority was to find out where the leaks came from. Benedict appointed a committee of three cardinals to investigate, headed by Cardinal Julián Herranz, the former personal secretary of Opus Dei's founder. The Vatican police force was ordered to tap the telephones of a number of people in the Curia, unbeknown to them.[10]

Meanwhile, the IOR did not pass the first checks stipulated by Moneyval. The American State Department announced on 8 March 2012 that it was putting the Vatican on a list of "problem" states as far as the fight against money laundering was concerned. A few days later, JP Morgan Bank announced that it was closing the IOR account at its Milan branch because for two years the IOR had circulated almost $2.2 billion without replying to any regulatory questions. There was a further body blow in May: the Italian courts publicly reproached the IOR for dragging its heels before explaining suspicious money movements worth $1.5 million in an account held by a Sicilian priest from the Trapani diocese. The police were interested in why this priest had links with a local builder and wondered whether the priest and his bishop were laundering for a Mafia organisation. At first, the IOR replied that the requests had not been made properly. But when the priest confessed, the Vatican decided to suspend him, as well as his bishop, for selling diocesan property.[11]

For his part, Gotti Tedeschi decided to make his own inquiry for the Pope on the way in which the IOR had strayed from its mandate because of the Mafia, sometimes through relatives of priests. He did so without anyone else's knowledge as he trusted nobody and feared for his life. His inquiries, for instance, uncovered among the bank's clients the name of Matteo Messina Denaro (nicknamed "Diabolic"), an arms and drugs dealer on the run, who was accused of a dozen murders.[12] On several occasions he asked the Pope's assistant, Georg Gänswein, for a meeting with Benedict, but to no avail.

Without his knowledge, Domenico Giani had informed Gänswein that Gotti Tedeschi was the subject of an inquiry, instigated by Bertone, to determine whether he was mentally unstable. A Roman psychotherapist had

been asked to observe him during a Christmas party in 2011 and then wrote a report, addressed to the IOR's chairman, Paolo Cipriani, saying that Gotti Tedeschi was suffering from "egocentricity, narcissism, and showing a partial disconnection from reality which could be the sign of a psychopathological dysfunction". At the very least, it wasn't a proper clinical examination, but the letter was apparently enough to discredit Gotti Tedeschi within the Curia. The bank's supervisory council unanimously passed a motion of no confidence in him, invoking his alleged erratic behaviour and claiming he had spread confidential documents. The key to the puzzle was that the Vatican police probably thought it had identified (wrongly, as it turned out) Gotti Tedeschi as one of the sources of the leaks. His fate was sealed: he had to leave the IOR's management.

The day after he left, Giani's team arrested Paolo Gabriele in his Vatican apartment. There the police discovered boxes of confidential documents. Having read the book by Nuzzi, Georg Gänswein realised that very few people could have had access to such a large number of documents handled by the Pope. Apart from himself and Bertone, Gabriele was one of them. The major-domo was placed in a cell of the Vatican prison, which was hardly ever used. He admitted to being the author of the leaks. He was found guilty and sentenced to thirty months in prison by a Vatican court, a sentence that was reduced to eighteen months when taking into account mitigating circumstances, namely, his idealistic motives and the fact that there was no personal benefit involved. Paolo Gabriele died in November 2020 after a long illness.

On 5 June Gotti Tedeschi's apartment was searched by police in connection with an investigation into a case of corruption involving the armaments company Finmeccanica, whose chairman was one of his friends. The police seized all the records he had kept. Ironically, these documents enabled them to establish that he had tried to fight against the IOR's suspect activities. On one of his memos, Gotti Tedeschi had even added this handwritten note: "I have seen things in the Vatican which frighten me."[13]

On 18 June, Moneyval published the official report of an inspection of the Vatican bank.[14] The inspectors estimated that it held some 33 000 accounts and $8.3 billion of assets. They thought that the AIF, the supervisory authority, hadn't fulfilled its role properly. Too many transactions had been made without the origin of the funds being known,

involving in particular accounts held by people based in countries of the South. The report recommended that stricter criteria should be used to recruit the bank's management. It agreed that the IOR should make more of an effort and that a further inspection would take place a year later.

Shortly afterwards, the Vatican announced that René Brülhart had been appointed to head the AIF. This Swiss expert on money laundering had just spent eight years at the head of the Luxembourg financial intelligence service. Here he had distinguished himself by finding a large part of Saddam Hussein's assets hidden in Luxembourg, which meant they could be returned to the Iraqi government.

It is still not known who organised this dramatic turn of events. Some attribute Gotti Tedeschi's fall to the manoeuvring of a rival institution to Opus Dei, the Knights of Columbus, the strong arm of conservative American Catholics. This institution derives its power from an insurance portfolio worth some $85 billion. In the 2000s, the Knights of Columbus contributed $1.5 billion to the Holy See's budget. Carl Anderson, the "Supreme Knight" and the organisation's head, was on the IOR board and was not the least active among those wanting to obtain Gotti Tedeschi's departure, perhaps even hoping to succeed him.

But that doesn't explain who manipulated Paolo Gabriele. All observers agreed that he acted under influence. Nicolas Diat, the French author of a book praising Benedict XVI, did not hide the fact that he'd profited from confidences given him by the emeritus Pope's entourage. And he referred to their suspicions about the Vatileaks:

> How did a cardinal from the north of Italy, raised to the purple in November 2010 and appointed prefect of an important congregation, imagine for a single moment that his secret meetings with Paolo Gabriele could help the Pope? Once close to Cardinal Siri, this prelate had already distinguished himself by giving not very wise advice to Cardinal Bertone, whom he said he was close to, while at the same time criticising his management of the Curia violently behind his back. He introduced Tarcisio Bertone to the young Marco Simeon, a man of doubtful influence who was to become one of the secret advisors of the Secretary of State. With a shameless business sense, Marco Simeon insinuated himself, from 2006 to the time of the first Vatileaks, as the obligatory go-between for Cardinal Bertone and the Catholic institutions that wanted to benefit from the Holy See's financial support.

> Why did Cardinal Bertone need Marco Simeon, since relations between the Secretariat and the institutions close to the Church could easily be managed internally? All the more so as the young advisor created a most dubious commissions system.

Simeon wanted a commission of 9% for the help he gave for various projects. What we still need to know is who the mysterious cardinal was who collected the documents stolen by Gabriele and introduced Simeon to Bertone. Diat added this comment: “The aim of this Genovese cardinal was simple: overthrow Cardinal Bertone, show loyalty to the Pope without fail, become the next Secretary of State, and then, like Cardinal Pacelli, accede to the highest pontificate.”

When the details gleaned by Diat were all lined up, the portrait seemed to correspond to Mgr Mauro Piacenza. Born in Genoa in September 1944 and ordained by Cardinal Siri in 1969, Piacenza was appointed cardinal in November 2010, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy. He was the great manipulator of Paolo Gabriele and Gianluigi Nuzzi’s real source, according to Benedict XVI’s entourage. But was he alone? Had he, for example, been helped by Cardinal Sodano’s clan? In 2013, Pope Francis decided to appoint Piacenza to the position of Major Penitentiary, in charge of the Vatican jail, which cannot be described as a promotion.

The murder of an ambassador

“This death became a real political matter … but it went almost unnoticed.” So said a Roman source. This was a reference to the violent death of Mgr Michael Courtney, 58, the apostolic nuncio to Burundi, on 29 December 2009. The nuncio, an Irish citizen, was killed by shots to his head, shoulder and leg near Minago, a town situated to the south of the capital, Bujumbura. “It was not an accident, he was killed,” declared the Burundian president, Domitien Ndayizeye, adding that an investigation had begun.[15] The archbishop was in a car flying the Vatican flag when shots rang out from a nearby hill. The three other passengers only suffered light wounds. The tyres were deliberately targeted, thereby delaying the vehicle’s arrival at the hospital and preventing the archbishop from being saved. He died on the operating table. The area, in Bururi province, was criss-crossed by soldiers of the National Liberation Forces, a rebel group. But they didn’t claim responsibility for the action.

Burundi also suffered from the ravages of the ethnic war between Hutus and Tutsis, which caused almost 300 000 deaths. The country’s first elected president, the Hutu Melchior Ndadaye, was assassinated in 1993. Despite

efforts to find peace in which Nelson Mandela was personally involved, violence was still omnipresent in 2003. In November, three rebel Hutu factions agreed to lay down their weapons and merge with the national army. But a fourth faction, the National Liberation Forces, continued the struggle. At first sight, Mgr Courtney seemed to be a collateral victim of the civil war.

But the matter was far from simple. The shots fired, which spared the driver and two passengers out of three, did not look like a guerrilla attack, but more like professional sniper fire. Western intelligence agents present in the country thought that the nuncio had been the victim of a contract. It was the South African Catholic weekly, the *Southern Cross*, which broached the taboo subject in its 9 December 2003 edition: the death of Mgr Courtney, it said, was planned “high up”. Contradicting the official version, the newspaper pointed a finger at the former Burundian president, Pierre Buyoya.[16]

This serious accusation against a former head of state didn’t make the international press headlines. The *Southern Cross* based its story on the evidence collected by a Burundian journalist, who claimed that his investigation had led to the death of several members of his own family. According to him, Archbishop Courtney had information about another murder, committed in November 2001—that of Dr Kassi Manlan, a World Health Organization (WHO) representative in Burundi. This 55-year-old doctor from the Ivory Coast had worked in Bujumbura for three months when on 21 November 2001 his body was found, with his skull beaten in, on the banks of Lake Tanganyika, near a yacht club frequented by Belgian expatriates. The police inquiry implicated his secretary and four guards from a private security company. The secretary apparently planned the crime with one of Dr Manlan’s colleagues to stop him revealing that funds meant to be used in the fight against a malaria epidemic had been misappropriated from the WHO.

In 2005, the Burundi courts handed down four death sentences and nine prison sentences. The brother of one of those accused, the lawyer François Nyamoya, claimed the Burundian intelligence services had planned Dr Manlan’s murder. Mr Maingain, the Belgian lawyer who defended this accused woman, demanded that the question of the alleged involvement of Mr Buyoya and his wife in the murder be resolved. As a result his client was freed. The American FBI sent two investigators as part of the bilateral

accords between the United States and Burundi. Four high-ranking policemen were accused, as well as the head of the private security company and some ex-convicts. Émile Manisha, commander of the public security police (PSP) at the time, was depicted as the brains behind the crime, as *Jeune Afrique* reported:

> During the trial, the motive for the crime was not made clear nor established with any certainty. However, in August 2002, the editor of abarundi.org, an Internet site which Burundians rate highly, published a letter from an Ivory Coast informer who said that "certain Burundian political circles" knew about the report that Kassi Manlan was preparing and knew that it contained details of the people behind the misappropriated funds.
>
> A certain Mr X ordered the Governor of the Central Bank of Burundi to have sums coming from the WHO pass through an intermediary account in France (that of the research and consultancy company Kost International), from which the money would go, not to Burundi, but into a private account. The WHO soon realised that the money had not arrived in the Central Bank of Burundi and asked its representative in Bujumbura why. In all likelihood, Dr Manlan had traced the movement of the money right up to the original payer, and what he was doing became known as a result of phone-tapping, which was common in that country.[17]

According to the *Southern Cross*, Manlan was about to accuse the president at the time of the murder, Pierre Buyoya. Though we don't know how, Mgr Courtney had obtained all or part of this information and was planning to go to Brussels to hand the dossier over to the European authorities. According to our information, the WHO commissioned an internal report on Dr Manlan's assassination which fingered members of President Buyoya's entourage. This was perhaps why it was never published or sent to the justice system of Burundi. On the other hand, it was in fact sent to the Secretary General of the UNO, Kofi Annan. And according to our Roman source, the Secretariat of State knew about it but made no comment.

Once again diplomacy won out against the search for truth. Former president Buyoya died of Covid in France in December 2020.

An admission of failure

On 11 February 2013, the world press announced the astonishing news: Benedict XVI was resigning. The media machine sprang into action. It was said that the Pope had been stunned by a report from the cardinals charged with looking into the Vatileaks. This had exposed in detail the notorious “gay lobby” of high-level prelates who, according to the cardinals, indulged in orgies and exercised a disproportionate influence on the Curia, while some were also blackmailed by third parties. Shortly before leaving his post, Benedict (or rather Bertone) appointed a new IOR chairman—Ernst von Freyberg, an aristocratic Catholic from Germany and treasurer of the Order of Malta.

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THE INFERNAL MACHINE

For decades the Vatican security services had had to ensure that no one brought a radio transmitter or a microphone into a conclave for the election of a new pope. But with the 2013 election there was a new element. Like many other European states, the Vatican had become a victim of the US National Security Agency's "big ears". It was the Italian weekly, Panorama, which confirmed this: the cardinals and the Pope himself had been the targets of bugging.[1] According to the website Cryptome, 46 million telephone conversations had been intercepted in Italy in only one month in 2012–13. The Vatican of course was included in this. It is very likely that the NSA picked up the prelates' telephone conversations in the days preceding the conclave, which would have given them an idea of trends before the first vote. "It is suspected that the Sovereign Pontiff's conversations may have been listened to. Since 2005, the American secret services have been closely interested in Bergoglio, according to Wikileaks reports," Panorama said. The US government formally rejected any accusation of intercepting communications in Europe. They claimed that this data, if it existed, had been given to them by European intelligence agencies. Was this a way of "implicating" the Italian secret services?

As we recall, Bergoglio's name had come up during the preceding conclave. This time round, the Argentine prelate did not start off as a

favourite. Indeed, some people decided to dig up old files about him.

A papabile full of surprises

As usual, several groups with various agendas coalesced before the conclave. The Americans wanted greater transparency and order in the way the Vatican was managed, especially in controlling the IOR. They also hoped that papal decisions would be more collegial. A German and Austrian group of prelates were looking for a "centrist" figure, but somebody who would also be able to reform the Curia. Amazingly—because they didn't get on—Cardinals Re, Bertone and Sodano and a large section of the Curia decided to block Cardinal Angelo Scola, the Archbishop of Milan, and instead support the Brazilian Cardinal Odilo Scherer. This maladroit sponsorship scuppered his candidature; it was the way the "old" Curia worked and it was what the non-Italians didn't want anymore.

None of the favourites seemed to be capable of winning, which gave Bergoglio once more a chance. He was a smiling and dynamic figure in spite of his age (76). His speech, delivered during the general meetings, in favour of a Church that "comes out of itself and reaches out to those at the margins" made a strong impression. A group of European prelates decided to make him their candidate and joined the Americans and the Germans. After the third round, he was clearly ahead of the others. The Curia and the Italian party swept in to assure his victory.

After the new pope was appointed, the accusations began to roll in. Bergoglio had apparently cooperated with the Argentine military junta between 1976 and 1982. He was accused especially of betraying two Jesuit colleagues who were tortured. The source of the accusations was an Argentine journalist, Horacio Verbitsky.[2]

Born in Buenos Aires in 1936, the eldest son of an Italian émigré couple who supported Perón, Bergoglio started studying chemistry but at 21 decided to enter the Jesuits. He undertook two years of novitiate, three years of philosophy and humanities, and four years of theology. During his studies, he taught literature and psychology. From 1964 to 1966 he was at the Colegio del Salvador, a Jesuit and Perónist centre: it promoted a theology of culture, which argued that Catholicism came before the state and the nation, and formed their foundations. Argentina defined itself above

all in terms of its Catholicism. Bergoglio made his final vows in 1973. He was appointed Provincial (head) of the Argentine Jesuits that same year, which, at 36, put him in charge of the Jesuits in that country as well as neighbouring Uruguay. In the 1970s, the theology of liberation spread throughout South America and fascinated many young Jesuits.

When Perón disappeared in 1974, Argentina suffered from right-wing and left-wing terrorism and a military coup d'état in 1976. Tanks appeared in the streets of Buenos Aires. Thirty-thousand Argentinians vanished in seven years; most were shot, while some were thrown into the sea from military aircraft. And 1.5 million people were forced into exile. The junta subjected the country to a severe regime of neoliberalism, which brought the banking system to its knees in 1980; and, in a headlong rush of nationalist fervour, the country invaded the Falkland Islands in April 1982, challenging British sovereignty there. After the military were defeated by the British, the junta collapsed in 1983.

Bergoglio was at the head of the Argentine Jesuits during this particularly dark period, until 1979. His priests were divided between progressives and conservatives. He himself was not a supporter of the theology of liberation and he later recognised that, from a lack of experience, he had been too authoritarian. He tried to discipline four Jesuits, teachers at the university. Two of them, Fathers Orlando Yorio and Francisco Jalics, who had set up a community in a shanty-town, were kidnapped in May 1976 by the death squads. They were tortured and imprisoned for five months. Bergoglio appealed to those in authority in the dictatorship for their freedom. He later helped them flee the country.

Although it was obvious that Jalics was deeply disturbed by these events, he made it quite clear after Bergoglio's election to the pontificate that the Pope had not denounced him. But Orlando Yorio's evidence as taken down by Verbitsky dealt with Bergoglio severely. When the Jesuits refused to give up their work in the shanty-town, Bergoglio suspended them. In 2010 Orlando's sister took the matter to court.

After democracy was re-established, the atrocities committed by the military were investigated and Bergoglio was found not guilty of any act of commission. Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, the Noble Peace Prize-winner, declared: "There were bishops who were party to the dictatorship, but not Bergoglio." Alicia Oliviera, the first Argentine woman to become a criminal judge, testified that when she was working underground, Bergoglio

transported her while she hid in the boot of his car. It is common knowledge today that he used his status as a priest to save people persecuted by the military junta. The book *Bergoglio's List*[3] presents the evidence of ten people saved by the Jesuit, who helped about a hundred or so escape via San José de San Miguel College, a university of which he was the rector from 1980 onwards. Even if he did make mistakes, this investigation showed that he had involved himself and taken real risks to save lives.

In a book that appeared in Argentina at the beginning of 2021, the Pope talked about this period when he helped "underground people to get out of the country to save their lives". "For six months, I consulted [a psychiatrist] once a week," the Pope revealed. "She helped me to understand the way I dealt with my fears at the time. Imagine what it was like transporting a person hidden in your car—barely concealed under a blanket—and going through three military checkpoints in the Campo de Mayo," the country's largest military camp. "The stress it produced in me was enormous," confided the Sovereign Pontiff.[4] These revelations, unprecedented for a pope in office, showed that he knew what underground activity was all about.

After a stint as a university professor from 1979, Bergoglio was sent in 1986 to Germany to work on his thesis. In 1990 the head of the Jesuits sent him to a post in Cordoba, 700 km to the north-west of Buenos Aires; this could be seen as a form of banishment for having hindered the "progressive" movement. In June 1992, he was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires, a kind of second chance. He was made a bishop in 1998 and a cardinal in 2001. He is known for his simple manner and his modest life, his regular visits to the poorer quarters of cities. As archbishop, he asked his priests to go out and live in the shanty-towns.

At the beginning of the 2000s, after a period of austerity, the country went through another severe banking crisis and defaulted on its international debt. The cost of these neoliberal policies for the most helpless in society made Bergoglio increasingly hostile to liberalism; and he then became known as a "leftist". In 2005, he was elected chairman of the Bishops' Conference of Argentine and became the person in the Church who spoke to President Kirchner and his wife Cristina, who succeeded her husband as head of the country in 2007.

It is not easy to situate Bergoglio: he is considered a traditionalist as far as doctrine and social questions are concerned, but his consideration for the fate of the poorest and his very simple life have made him popular throughout Argentina.

A new style

Once he became pope, Bergoglio seemed to imitate the style of John XXIII: he renounced all pomp and decided to live among other priests in the Santa Martha residence (where he occupies a 70 m^2; two-room flat: a bedroom and a small living room) rather than in the papal apartments. This could be seen as a refusal to be isolated in the exercise of power or to be imprisoned by the Curia. He wants the members of the Curia to get rid of their corporatist reflexes, their internal struggles, their taste for luxury, and their thirst for power. This is easier said than done. The Pope has shown great skills in communicating, in contrast to his predecessor. He has not called doctrines into question but has spoken frankly without seeming to preach. You can see in him what you want to see. Charismatic, easy-going, and at ease in front of crowds, he inspires confidence and he quickly became popular.

“I don’t need bodyguards. I’m not unprotected,” he said at the beginning of his pontificate. Francis wants to be accessible to everybody; he likes direct contact with the faithful. “But he isn’t easy to protect,” as a Roman security source has testified, “because he’s very accessible both inside the Vatican and outside.” Security measures have been reinforced ever since the Daesh attacks in France in January and November 2015. Italian policemen have appeared in Saint Peter’s Square, their machine guns slung over their shoulders. For the Italian secret services, and for the Vatican’s, the greatest risk is the lone wolf. Juan Carlos Molina, an Argentine priest courageously engaged in the fight against drug trafficking, confided to Francis during a visit to Santa Martha in 2014: “You’re living in a dangerous place, you know. Be careful, they can kill you.” Apparently Francis replied, “It’s the best thing that could happen to me, and to you too.”[5]

In the days following his election, Francis decided to replace Bertone with Pietro Parolin, 58, who had been Under-Secretary of State from 2002

to 2009. Notably, he had negotiated the establishment of diplomatic relations with Vietnam. The Vatican could now appoint bishops in that country, on condition that three candidates were presented to the authorities, as was the practice in the Cold War days in the Eastern bloc countries. Parolin was considered a “centrist.”

The Pope also decided to create a diverse working group, including eight cardinals from the five continents who would help reform the Curia—his big priority—a body that Francis didn’t hesitate to call the “papacy’s leprosy”. This “council of cardinals” was an unprecedented innovation, a real step towards collegiality. Francis devoted his first months as pope to meeting and consulting all the departments of the Curia and those responsible for Catholic congregations. As far as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was concerned, Francis wanted to end the denunciations of heterodoxy and let the local episcopal conferences deal with any doctrinal errors on the spot, even if it meant asking Rome for advice.

His many initiatives met with active resistance. There was criticism of the excesses of democracy which could threaten the authority of the pope; the promotion of women; and so on.

When Francis became pope, financial questions were not necessarily at the top of his list of priorities. But they were not long in becoming so. An accountant with the Vatican treasury, Mgr Nunzio Scarano, was arrested together with a former agent of the Italian internal secret services[6] and accused of running a tax-evasion business for the benefit of rich Italians, in particular shipbuilding magnates, friends of Silvio Berlusconi. He was said to carry suitcases of banknotes to Switzerland aboard a private jet.[7] Scarano was nicknamed “Monsignor 500” because of his habit of asking his business associates to exchange bundles of 500 euro notes against cheques of 5 000 or 10 000 euros. Tapping Scarano’s phone showed that Cipriani, the managing director of the IOR, and Tulli, his deputy, were also involved, as well as other people in authority in the Vatican. Massimiliano Marciano, a friend of Mgr Scarano, admitted to investigators that the prelate had used the Vatican’s diplomatic bag to carry cash from Switzerland to Italy for the Agnelli family. Marciano claimed he saw bags filled with gold ingots that were being loaded into a refrigerated truck parked in front of the IOR building.

Scarano was found to possess several paintings in his home worth at least $6 million, well above his presumed means. He had unwisely drawn attention to himself by filing a complaint for theft from his luxurious flat. The police wondered how he could have afforded such artworks with his modest Vatican salary. Scarano frequented various circles of “knights” like the Gentlemen of His Holiness. From his prison, Mgr Scarano wrote to Pope Francis, saying that he had tried to report the embezzlement to Bertone, Dziwisz and Sodano but, according to him, his superiors in the IOR had been able to carry on regardless because they could blackmail these prelates.

The Pope showed his anger and asked for the people responsible to leave. In front of journalists, Francis made this sally, which has become famous: “We have this monsignor in prison […]; he didn’t go to prison just because he looked like the Blessed Imelda!”[8]

Paolo Cipriani and Massimo Tulli were dismissed. The cleaning-up operation continued when the work of a legal consultant of the IOR was called into question. A consultancy company was brought in to the rescue and spent two years going through the bank’s transactions.

Having been witness to a number of scandals and bankruptcies in his own country, Francis approached the IOR’s problems with suspicion. He even thought of closing the bank down but finally ordered a reform from “top to bottom”. The Pope set up a commission with the task of informing him about the IOR and recommending the necessary reforms. He appointed his own private secretary and right-hand man, Alfred Xuereb, who was from Malta. Francis also appointed Mgr Battista Ricca (the director of the Santa Martha residence) as supervising prelate of the IOR. But a few days later, L’Espresso’s Vatican specialist, Sandro Magister, revealed Ricca’s former active homosexual life, of which the Pope was unaware. Mgr Ricca was accused of having been removed from the nunciature in Uruguay in 2001 for “scandalous behaviour”. He had apparently lived quite openly with an officer of the Swiss Army. Once again, someone within the Curia used the press to undermine the Pope and his desire to reform it.

In 2014, to the surprise of the Italian banking world, a lawsuit was opened against two lawyers and Angelo Caloia, who headed the IOR until 2009. According to the Vatican courts, 29 bank properties were disposed of with Caloia’s authorisation between 2001 and 2008. These properties had

been sold for 34 million euros below their market value and part of the difference was returned and slipped into the accused's pockets, then credited to Swiss accounts. In all, the accused had received some 19 million euros in bribes. The Vatican courts confiscated large sums from their accounts and provisionally set compensation at 23 million euros.

On 21 January 2021 Angelo Caloia was sentenced to eight years in prison. It was the very first time that a prison sentence had been pronounced in the Vatican State for a financial crime. Caloia at once appealed against the ruling.

During all the scandals throughout the decades, the ingredients remained the same: ubiquitous wheeling and dealing, and the exchange of services with the Italian political and economic elite, for which, after 1990, the Cold War could no longer be used as a justification. And then there was the presence of members of the Italian secret services. For example, in 2013, Francesco La Motta, former deputy chief of internal intelligence and a senior civil servant in the Italian Ministry of the Interior, was arrested; he'd been made a Gentleman of His Holiness in 2007. La Motta was accused of misappropriating 10 million euros from a church renovation fund. Weighed down by all these affairs, Pope Francis declared that the Catholic orders of knighthood were "archaic, useless and harmful" and that he would no longer appoint anyone to them.

A final embarrassing example concerns a top civil servant, Angelo Balducci, another Gentleman of His Holiness, who was arrested in February 2010 and appeared in court for corruption in 2013. Accused of diverting contracts for public works, he had stuffed himself full of bribes. Using his IOR account, he acquired the services of homosexual prostitutes, some of whom were seminarians, and allowed his friends in the clergy and in politics to share their services. According to a witness, he received in prison no fewer than 70 visits from parliamentarians. "A real procession. If he talks, the Second Republic and half the Vatican will fall."[9]

Vatileaks 2

At the beginning of 2014, Francis replaced all the members of the supervisory council of the IOR. Only the Frenchman Jean-Louis Tauran's post was renewed. At the end of January, Francis decided to replace the

ecclesiastical chairman of the Vatican's Supervisory and Financial Information Authority. In February he created a new Secretariat for the Economy, with the Australian Cardinal George Pell at its head.

In May, the weekly Bild revealed that the former Secretary of State Bertone was accused of forcing the director of the IOR, Gotti Tedeschi, to grant a loan of $20 million to a friend, a television producer and member of Opus Dei. The loan was never repaid. Bild wondered if the friend in question hadn't paid part of the money to somebody else.

In July Francis replaced the IOR's director, Ernst von Freyberg, with Jean-Baptiste de Franssu, the head of an investment company. The new management team even included a woman, Mary Ann Glendon, a former US ambassador to the Vatican. Within a year, 3 500 IOR accounts were closed, but there remained a large number held by very wealthy private Italians. In 2014, Pell discovered that the bank held a million dollars in cash whose origin was not known and which didn't appear in the books. The bank got down to installing a computerised system of alerts. For each category of customers, an estimate was made of a "normal" volume of transactions. Investment decisions were now taken by a dedicated team. The IOR was not to speculate in shares but to ensure basic financial services and offer financial advice for Vatican employees, priests and religious orders.

Francis also wanted an end to real estate speculation on the religious orders' vacant properties, which were often sold and transformed into hotels and luxury residences. Too many dubious transactions had occurred during the previous decades. The Superior of the Camillians, Renato Salvatore, was arrested shortly after Scarano, for embezzlement related to the management of the order's 200 hospitals throughout the world.

The Pope created the COSEA, the Commission for the Economic Reform of the Administration of the Vatican. It had eight members, including a woman, Francesca Chaouqui, a former employee of Ernst and Young, who was close to Opus Dei. It seems that her candidature was put forward by the secretary of the commission, himself a member of Opus Dei, Mgr Vallejo Balda. After a year's work, the commission did not seem to have proved itself and it ceased to exist. Mgr Balda and his protégée, who were thought by the Pope's entourage to be too opportunistic, were not re-employed. They were criticised in particular for organising a big, rather worldly party on the roofs of the apostolic palaces for the canonisation of John Paul II and John XXIII.

But the commission's work became the subject of huge leaks, which enabled the journalists Gianluigi Nuzzi and Emiliano Fittipaldi to publish new books on corruption within the Vatican.[10] They revealed that there were still a hundred or so current accounts which were causing problems for the IOR and still a lot of scandalous spending, such as the payment of 200 000 euros by a charitable foundation for renovating the luxury apartment of Cardinal Bertone, the former Secretary of State (he was obliged to reimburse the money). These journalists were no longer whistleblowers: they were simply following the clean-up process already set in motion by the Pope. But they did give the impression that his pontificate was just as marked by scandals as the previous ones had been, whereas in fact an unprecedented effort was being made to put things to right.

Where did the leaks come from? This was revealed very soon. In November 2015, Francesca Chaouqui and Vallejo Balda were arrested by the police for "removing and divulging confidential information and documents". Chaouqui cooperated with the police and blamed everything on Mgr Balda; she was released at once. Unusually, Balda was put in prison. He appeared in court with his private secretary and with Francesca Chaouqui on a charge of criminal conspiracy. Balda and Chaouqui pointed fingers at each other during the trial. The only one to be sentenced to a prison term (18 months) was Balda, but he was freed in December 2016 by a decision of the Pope and told to rejoin his original diocese.

In 2014, the Pope appointed the Australian George Pell as Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy. His authoritarian manner didn't make friends within the Secretariat of State. He ordered a large-scale audit by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which was stopped shortly afterwards by the Secretariat of State. Pell's work was interrupted by accusations of past sexual abuses, which obliged him to return to Australia in 2017 for trial. This scandal was a setback for Francis, who'd been counting on Pell to help him clean up the Church's finances.

While visiting Calabria in June 2014, Francis excommunicated the Ndrangheta crime syndicate, what he called the "worship of evil", echoing the injunctions made by John Paul II twenty-one years earlier. Francis also beatified Father Puglisi from Palermo, whom the Mafia had assassinated in 1993. From a practical point of view, refusing to give Mafia members the sacraments could be complicated for certain priests, particularly those who

didn’t have the desire to become a martyr. Some pretended not to see what was going on. A deputy examining magistrate warned that by trying to clear out the Vatican, the Pope was disturbing a host of business and Mafia interests. “Those who up till now have fed on the power and the wealth coming directly from the Church are getting nervous, worried. Pope Bergoglio is in the process of dismantling centres of economic power in the Vatican. If the bosses could trip him up ever so slightly, they wouldn’t hesitate.”[11]

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BARACK AND FRANCIS

"Todos somos Americanos"

Barack Obama

On 17 December 2014, Cuba and the United States created a sensation by announcing they had re-established diplomatic relations, which had been broken after the disastrous, failed invasion orchestrated by the CIA in the Bay of Pigs in 1961. It was a major turning point in American politics. For the Cuban population, the lifting of the embargo raised immense hopes. Both Barack Obama and Raúl Castro thanked Pope Francis, who had been working to facilitate the secret negotiations between the two countries, without saying much more. What had happened in the wings?

An independent strategy

The diplomatic success demonstrated the meaning of "long time" and "timing", the hallmarks of Vatican diplomacy. It also illustrated what a South American pope could bring to this diplomacy. It proved finally that the Vatican had not lost its touch in matters of secret negotiation.

After the Cuban revolution in 1959, a number of priests were imprisoned in work camps or expelled. By closing seminaries, nationalising Catholic schools and imposing atheism, the regime seemed to announce that

the Church would disappear on the island. Despite all these setbacks, the Vatican never suspended its diplomatic relations with Cuba. This policy of compromise echoed the Ostpolitik led by Mgr Casaroli under Paul VI. In 1974, Mgr Casaroli went to Cuba for a “strictly ecclesiastical” visit, but he was able to talk to Fidel Castro. The Vatican remained consistent when it condemned the American embargo, which above all penalised the Cuban population. In the 1980s, John Paul II wanted to go to Cuba. For him it was imperative to revive Catholicism in Cuba, where the Pentecostal Churches were making huge inroads. The United States was all the more against this project because Washington thought John Paul II was an unconditional ally in the anti-communist struggle. The plan was postponed several times.

In 1985, the Brazilian Dominican friar Frei Betto published a book of interviews with Fidel Castro entitled *Fidel and Religion*. The Cuban regime wanted to show that it was less restrictive as far as the Church was concerned. For their part, the bishops started to put into practice what the Puebla Conference of 1979 recommended as regards the preferential option for the poor.[1] In 1992 Fidel Castro proclaimed that the regime was no longer atheist in character and went to Rome in 1996. This opened the way for a trip by John Paul II in 1998, much to the annoyance of the Americans, who were still insistent on isolating Cuba. As John Paul II’s aim was to assist religious freedom, he wanted to show that he was conciliatory. This low-profile policy, avoiding all criticisms of the regime, proved of benefit. A seminary opened in 2010 in the presence of Raúl Castro. The Church was again becoming a key player in Cuban society.

After fearing a rapprochement between the Vatican and Cuba, the George W. Bush administration began to see the Pope as the catalyser of possible political change on the island, in the same way as John Paul II had been in Poland in the 1980s. The Holy See had different ideas, however. The Vatican even feared that on an island like Cuba, where the Church had never been very deep-rooted, too rapid a transition towards democracy might be fatal for it.

Secret conversations

When Barack Obama arrived in the White House in January 2009, a turning point was reached. Obama announced that he wanted to effect a complete

change in US relations with Cuba. Raúl Castro declared he was ready to talk. But the thaw didn't last. Benedict XVI went to the island in March 2012 and didn't miss the opportunity to criticise the American embargo during his leaving speech. After he was re-elected in 2012, Barack Obama wanted to improve relations with Cuba, as he was concerned that he hadn't achieved many other foreign policy successes. A new pope, Francis, arrived in March 2013 and he was a Latin American. After the death of Hugo Chávez, it was clear that Venezuela would not be able to continue to deliver free oil to Cuba indefinitely and that only a rapprochement with the United States would enable Cuba to avoid an economic crisis.

Key men in the Secretariat were well placed to deal with this matter. The number two, Giovanni Becciu, had been nuncio in Havana from 2009 to 2011. The Under-Secretary for Relations with States, Mgr Antoine Camilleri, had been nuncio in Cuba from 2005 to 2006. Finally Francis had had close relations with the Archbishop of Havana, Jaime Ortega, since 1981. Moreover, a woman in the shadows played a little-known role in this matter, the abbess Tekla Famiglietti, Mother Superior of the Bridgettine Order in Rome. She had become close to the immediate entourage of John Paul II thanks to Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe. She had the most unexpected acquaintances, for example with the "lord of the casinos" in Mexico, José Maria Guardia. Despite his notorious connections with the Juárez underworld, he was made a commander of Bridgettine Order in 2000. Tekla became a non-official agent of the Vatican, and was able to meet Fidel Castro on several occasions.[2] She thus obtained permission to set up a seminary in the heart of Havana. She also contributed to the Vatican–Cuba dialogue.

Barack Obama met Francis on 27 March. The president revealed to the Pope that the United States had "something going with Cuba": a first secret round of negotiations was planned for June 2013. Obama indicated to Francis that it would be useful if he could play a role in this dialogue.[3] The Pope chose Cardinal Ortega as the go-between for the two parties. During an interview in May 2013, Francis told Ortega to deliver letters personally to Barack Obama and Raúl Castro. He advised Castro to free the American Alan Gross, a worker for USAID (the US Agency for International Development) who was accused of espionage, so that the United States could make a similar gesture on their side. The Obama administration

wanted the operation to remain secret and wasn't happy to see Cardinal Ortega arriving at the White House. But Ortega insisted and ended by meeting President Obama on 17 August 2013. His name did not appear on the register of visitors. He was charged by Obama with delivering a message to Castro, one of hope that relations between their two countries would improve before the end of his term of office. It was in the Vatican that the Cuban and American negotiators met to finalise and then sign an agreement on 28 October. Apart from freeing prisoners, both countries decided to re-establish diplomatic relations. The Pope's representatives assumed the role of guarantors of the agreement, which was made public on 17 December, Francis's birthday, a discreet tribute to his role as facilitator.

This secret negotiation brought the Holy See back to the forefront of the diplomatic scene. On the Cuban side, Pope Francis's "Latino" background and his positioning gave legitimacy to the rapprochement with the American enemy. On the American side, the operation was made possible by the good understanding between President Obama and Francis on several issues, like the struggle against global warming. It then became inevitable that Pope Francis should go to Cuba; his visit took place in September 2015. He tried to defend both freedom of worship and political freedom. Symbolically, he then flew to Washington, where he was received with much pomp at the White House. He also made a speech before Congress, followed by another to the United Nations in New York.

The hidden side of reconciliation

This diplomatic success owed much to Archbishop Jaime Ortega, who was close to Cardinal Sodano and who adopted an accommodating attitude towards the Cuban authorities. As could be expected in a dictatorship, especially a communist one, he was under constant surveillance by the Cuban police, who were well aware of his private life. According to an expert on Cuban intelligence questioned by Frédéric Martel, "Cardinal Ortega and his entourage were placed under the direct surveillance of Alejandro Castro Espín, son of the former president Raúl Castro. The unofficial head of all the Cuban secret services had over the years compiled a thick file on the leaders of the Catholic Church in Cuba, and on Jaime Ortega in particular, using very sophisticated technological surveillance methods. In other words, Ortega was *atendido*, 'protected' at a high level. A

very secretive person, Alejandro Castro Espín occupied the position of Coordinator of the Defence Council and National Security, which brought together all the intelligence and counter-espionage services of Cuba. He himself was Cardinal Ortega's controlling officer. He looked after all the exchanges with the Vatican and, while we are not aware of any photograph of him (we know that he lost an eye in the fighting in Angola), he appeared during these last years in one single shot, in the company of his father Raúl, alongside Pope Francis."[4]

Lieutenant Colonel Juan Reinaldo Sánchez, one of Fidel Castro's former bodyguards, recalled the surveillance techniques and sexual blackmail the regime employed, in his memoirs, *La vie cachée de Fidel Castro* (The Hidden Life of Fidel Castro).[5] A former Cuban colonel, in exile in the United States, has even claimed on television, without ever being contradicted, that Cardinal Ortega had an affair with an agent of the Cuban secret services; some of the meetings were filmed to ensure the cardinal's support for the regime. According to Martel, a large number of active priests in Cuba were gay and were therefore held captive, as it were, by the secret services.

It is obviously worrying for the Vatican that its bishops and archbishops should be controlled or constrained in certain countries, because their private lives are spied upon. However, it wasn't evident that Cardinal Ortega had compromised himself in any way that would cause a problem for the Holy See. Maybe the Cuban leaders just needed to feel they were in control of the situation if they should want to accept the Vatican's mediation.

29

CHINA

THE OTHER CHURCH OF SILENCE

The evangelisation of China has a long history. The first Catholic bishop of Peking, Jean de Montecorvino, was appointed in 1307. The missionaries founded medical, social and educational institutions and were persecuted almost continually. In the 19th century, the Catholic Church saw substantial growth in its numbers of adherents, amounting to some 750,000 faithful at the time of the Boxer uprising (1899). A fire in the cathedral of Peking in 1900 was one of the incidents that sparked off the dispatch of a European expeditionary force to deal with the so-called Boxers. It is estimated that 30 000 Catholics were killed during that time.[1]

The Catholics, these spies from abroad

In 1912, a republic was proclaimed in China and Sun Yat-sen founded the nationalist Kuomintang party. The Catholics, at the time numbering some 1.4 million, rallied to the new regime. The new constitution proclaimed religious freedom. But there was much political instability. During World War II, the Nationalists joined in an alliance with Mao Zedong's Communists against the invading Japanese, but after the war China plunged

back into civil war. In 1946, Pius XII elevated the first Chinese bishop in history. At the time there were more than 3 million Catholics in the country. On 1 October 1949, Mao proclaimed the People's Republic of China. The communist regime, like its Soviet ally, was hostile towards the Church.

All Europeans and Americans present in the country were considered as potential spies. The Chinese internal security service reproduced its Soviet counterpart's ways of thinking and behaving, and violently attacked foreign priests, who were accused of being "agents of subversion". It was true that certain missionaries informed the secret services of their country of origin, but this was restricted to collecting information. For example, Father Jean-Elie Maillot was a valuable source for the French SDECE: he helped French agents enter Yunnan Province and leave again. Father Léon Trivière, who was expelled to Hong Kong, continued for thirty years to assemble and publish very detailed information on what was going on in China in the *Bulletin de la Société des missions étrangères*. Another information letter, *China News Analysis*, was established by a group of Hungarian Jesuits, led by Lazlo Ladany. In the mountains of the new territories, this group set up a network of listening stations for the Western services.[2]

Foreign bishops and missionaries were expelled. Although churches, religious schools and hospitals were not closed, they were confiscated and all religious signs were removed. Out of 3 000 priests in China in 1949, the secret service executed 200, expelled 500 and imprisoned 500. In 1951, a national office for religious affairs was created, in charge of supervising and regulating the religious life of the country. The government wanted to see the Chinese Church apply the three principles of self-governance, self-support and self-propagation, which originated among various Protestant denominations.

In 1956, the State Administration for Religious Affairs called a conference to create an association of Catholic patriots. This saw the light of day the following year as the CCPA (Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association). In 1968, the CCPA appointed bishops to replace those who were in exile or in prison. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith warned that the consecrating bishop and those consecrated risked being excommunicated. Shortly before he died, Pius XII published the encyclical *Ad Apostolorum Principis*, condemning the CCPA and expressing great concern for the Catholics of China.

According to those familiar with the Chinese security system, the CCPA depends closely on the United Front Work Department, which is an important political intelligence service attached to the Party's Central Committee.[3] This department didn't hesitate to infiltrate the Church: it sent agents who joined the faithful and whose mission was to recruit priests or monks. The latter were allowed to go abroad to collect intelligence for the benefit of the Chinese services, while at the same time informing Rome about how the Chinese authorities were persecuting them. According to Roger Faligot, Li Chuwen, the Xinhua intelligence head, might well have started his career as an infiltrated agent within the Church. The Belgian missionary Dries van Coillie, arrested in July 1951 and imprisoned for 34 months, was truly brainwashed; he wrote about this in a book of memoirs.[4] He was exiled from China in June 1954. In his book, he quoted a "secret order", dated 12 February 1957, which, according to him, embodied the Chinese government's religious policy. "By following the directives of the Party bosses, our comrades had to discover by all means possible how to penetrate into the very heart of each church, put themselves at the service of the secret police's new organisation, show great zeal in all church activities, conduct a large-scale attack, commit themselves totally, even call in the help of God and succeed in forming a united front, using the great charms and attractive force of the female sex."

In August 1966, Mao set China off on the Cultural Revolution, targeting intellectuals and artists in particular. The persecution of Catholics reached unprecedented levels. The State Administration for Religious Affairs and the CCPA, which were considered too uncritical, were suppressed. "Down with believing in Jesus!" the Red Guards chanted. Many priests found themselves in prison, whether "patriotic" or not. Others disappeared underground to continue their work. A number of churches were destroyed or transformed into workshops. Statues, religious objects and books were burned. Under torture, Christians were forced to abjure their faith. The last nuns present in China were expelled. During the years that followed, the regime thought it had eradicated Catholicism.

In April 1960, Paul VI appointed Mgr Yü Pin as Archbishop of Nanking, in exile in Taiwan. In 1971, while travelling in Asia, the Pope passed through Hong Kong and celebrated Mass at a racecourse. Mao's death in 1976 marked the end of the Cultural Revolution, and his successor

Deng Xiaoping set China on a new path. China opened itself up to international exchanges, but it was only very gradually that the churches were able to open their doors, under the supervision of the Administration for Religious Affairs, which had risen from the ashes.

Parallel churches

The first official opening of a church took place in Beijing in 1979. When he acceded to Saint Peter's throne, John Paul II didn't know the Chinese situation very well. The Archbishop of Marseilles, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, made several trips to China on behalf of the Vatican. He was contacted by underground priests in various places. He was therefore able to note for himself that the bishops who had agreed to join the CCPA were not necessarily hostile to Rome. It was therefore simplistic to compare them unfavourably with those who worked underground.

In order to allow the "Church of silence" to continue, the underground bishops started consecrating priests, first on their own initiative, then with the Pope's blessing. In 1984, the Pope asked all Western bishops who had been expelled from China between 1949 and 1951 to give up their positions so as to allow Chinese bishops to be appointed in their stead. That same year, 1984, the first "official" bishop consecrated without a pontifical commission asked to enter into communion with the Holy See. In his diocese, there were therefore two legitimate bishops, the clandestine one and the official one reconciled with Rome. Little by little, the official Chinese episcopate developed relations with other episcopates and received visitors from abroad.

The year 1989 was marred by the massacre on Tiananmen Square in Beijing. In the press, this event eclipsed the police repression of Catholics at Youtong in Hebei province, in which 32 were killed. In November, the first clandestine bishops' conference met in continental China. The Holy See decided to create a study mission in Hong Kong which would be responsible for maintaining discreet contacts with the underground clergy. The first person in charge between 1989 and 1992 was the Frenchman Mgr Jean-Paul Gobel. The Chinese leaders looked upon this opening with suspicion. They were convinced that John Paul II was in great part responsible for the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe and they had no intention of allowing the last great communist power to be weakened.

When the Pope announced in May 1991 that he had made Archbishop Gong Pin-mei a cardinal in secret in 1979 (he was living at the time in the United States after spending thirty years in prison), the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs accused John Paul II of interfering in Chinese internal affairs. After Tiananmen, the Chinese authorities were concerned when they saw young people flocking into the churches, a sign that the Catholic religion might well become a vehicle for political opposition.

At the beginning of 1996, the Vatican started talks with the Chinese authorities: the matter was pursued by the former deputy minister of foreign affairs Mgr Claudio Celli, who had been involved in the talks with Israel which ended in the 1993 accord. So as not to attract attention, in 1995 Celli was appointed Secretary of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See. Celli was given clandestine missions in China, which included distributing equipment, food and secret funds.

In Beijing, in January 1996, Celli met members of the Chinese government. This was the beginning of a long series of meetings. According to the accords signed between the UK and China, the British colony of Hong Kong had to be handed back to China in 1997, when it would acquire a special status within China. Beijing committed itself to maintaining the existing legal system for fifty years in terms of a policy of “one country, two systems”. As 2000 approached, more and more “official” bishops asked Rome to regularise their positions. By 2004, almost two-thirds had been regularised.

In March 2000, the Vatican announced that 120 martyrs who had died in China between 1648 and 1930 were to be canonised. This offended the Chinese authorities, who believed the Boxer rebellion was an anti-imperialist uprising foreshadowing the Communist Revolution. The Chinese press was let loose. Violent diatribes were made by Chinese officials against Cardinal Etchegaray, who was then in China to attend an international symposium.

Looking for an agreement

In 2005, when John Paul II died, the Chinese government sent condolences as well as warm greetings to the new pope, Benedict XVI. Beijing reminded him of its conditions for normalising relations with the Vatican: breaking with Taiwan, recognising Beijing as the sole legitimate government, and

undertaking not to interfere in Chinese affairs. The movement to legitimise official bishops by Rome continued. According to Mgr Zen, who was made Bishop of Hong Kong in 2003, it seemed the faithful were turning away from the bishops who were not recognised by Rome. Benedict XVI made Mgr Zen a cardinal in 2006.

The Pope sought to resume discussions with Beijing, which had been interrupted in 2000. Mgr Celli took a delegation to China in June 2003. This meeting did not meet with approval from the Chinese secret services, as *Intelligence Online* reported.

> According to our information, the CCPA thought that an approach of openness risked causing the official church to implode and mention was made of the arrest of a number of priests by the public security service (Gonganbu), even though they had been appointed by the Patriotic Association in the province of Hebei […] CCPA's boss Liu Bainian and the Chinese counter-espionage services thought that the Vatican's networks, the foreign missions and their various religious institutions were a risk and as big a threat as the Buddhist sect Falun Gong. They also denounced the appointment of forty-odd bishops of the clandestine church and above all that of the Vatican's representative in Hong Kong last February, Mgr Joseph Zen Ze-kiun. But on the other hand Gonganbu, the foreign intelligence service, seemed to want to profit from this opening by sending in Chinese priests who were in fact agents; over the last few months, several European counter-espionage services, which discussed the matter, have realised this.[5]

In 2007, Benedict XVI created a pontifical commission dedicated to China, just as Pius XII had done for Bosnia. It met twice a year during his pontificate. That same year the Pope sent an open letter to the Chinese Catholics in which he recognised their past suffering but asked them to forgive and to work towards reconciliation.

In 2013, Xi Jinping and Pope Francis came to power at the same time, give or take a day or two. Francis showed a great interest in the Chinese question and followed in his predecessors' footsteps. By appointing Pietro Parolin as Secretary of State, he showed his willingness to revive the "grand diplomacy" in the Ostpolitik tradition embodied by Cardinal Casaroli. He chose to renew direct contact with Beijing, with a further trip made by Mgr Celli. In 2015, the Chinese authorities took a step forward when, for the first time in three years, they authorised the ordination of a bishop, in the presence of bishops from both churches, who was recognised by both Beijing and Rome.

In 2017, there were rumours that an agreement was in sight, but matters were not so simple. Indeed, the condition for breaking off diplomatic

relations with Taiwan was accepted with the Taiwanese clergy's agreement. On the other hand, the "reconciliation" of the two clergies meant that in two dioceses underground bishops would resign for the benefit of official bishops not reconciled with Rome. Cardinal Zen in Hong Kong took their side. In September 2018 a provisional agreement was signed, which only concerned the appointment of bishops. Beijing could put forward candidates but Rome would have the last word on their appointment. The Pope rescinded the ex-communications of the non-reconciled official bishops. Cardinal Zen criticised this agreement, saying that Pope Francis "didn't know China very well" and was "naive".[6] "It's an agreement that will destroy the faithful Catholic Church, which will destroy the underground Church. Until today, it remains a persecuted Church but still a powerful one."

Under Xi Jinping's iron rule, the Communist Party tightened its control over Chinese society in all its aspects, including religious life. Between 2014 and 2016, the Zhejiang provincial authorities removed and destroyed more than a thousand crosses adorning religious buildings. In 2016, Xi called a conference on religious affairs, the first for a long time. It was a sign that he was worried. The Chinese leader enjoined Party members to protect themselves "against foreign infiltrations via religious means". All of this didn't prevent the 2018 accord from being signed, though there were further discussions starting in September 2000.

Meanwhile, during the summer of 2020, the Secretariat of State discovered that it was the victim of a cyber-attack. A group of Chinese hackers had infiltrated the Vatican's computer networks, according to an investigation by a specialised independent group, Recorded Future. The hackers had already attacked the Tibetan Buddhists, the Uighurs and members of Falun Gong. But it was the first time they had been surprised inside the Vatican's networks. They were also spotted in the computer system of the Vatican's Hong Kong mission.

The Trojan horse that was used seemed credible: it was a file of authentic documents from the Secretariat of State, addressed to Mgr Javier Herrera, the head of the Hong Kong mission. According to the report by Recorded Future, the attack was led by a group of state hackers called Red Delta (other analysts mentioned a group known by the name of "Mustang Panda"). They had clearly gone fishing for information on the state of mind of the Roman negotiators. But it also seems that they tried to identify the

contacts and activities of the Hong Kong mission in relation to the democratic opposition, which was then organising a large demonstration.[7] It appears that the Chinese services suspected the Church of helping behind the scenes to organise demonstrations.

It was thought for a while that this unprecedented attack would sabotage the discussions, but the negotiations continued. The Vatican strategy has hardly changed for twenty years. It is thought that there are now 10 to 12 million Catholics in China, or only 10% of the total number of Christians. The Vatican is worried about the Protestants' spectacular inroads during recent decades. For its part, China, on the defensive since it violated its agreement to respect Hong Kong's status, is looking for the prestige that a lasting agreement with the Vatican would give it. Both parties see in this imperfect agreement the starting point for a thoroughgoing process of achieving a modus vivendi. Both of them have a long-term perspective.

30

A STORY WITHOUT END

On 26 August 2018, the former nuncio to the United States, Carlo Maria Viganò, published an eleven-page “testimony” on the web concerning Theodore McCarrick, Cardinal Archbishop of Washington between 2000 and 2003, who was accused of sexual abuse. Viganò accused a number of prelates, including Pope Francis, of covering up McCarrick’s crimes. He had no hesitation in demanding the resignation of Francis. It must be remembered that Benedict XVI’s Secretary of State, Bertone, had sent Viganò to the United States in 2011 and that the following year Bertone’s letters to the Pope were leaked in the first set of Vatileaks. In 2015 Viganò, who was 75, became an emeritus cardinal.

Viganò claimed that in 2000, and again in 2003, Vatican diplomats in the United States had warned Secretary of State Sodano about McCarrick. In 2009 or 2010 Benedict XVI ended up by asking Cardinal McCarrick to withdraw and no longer participate in or celebrate Masses. The least that can be said is that this punishment was not applied very strictly, since McCarrick continued his travels, even to Rome. Viganò accused Pope Francis of having met McCarrick and even engaging him as his advisor. That is incorrect. Pope Francis had indeed exchanged a few words with him when he took up his duties, as he did with other cardinals, but without knowing at the time anything about his situation. But in February 2019, the Pope took the unprecedented decision to defrock him.

Who wants the Pope's neck?

As soon as this accusation against Francis was put online, about twenty American bishops indicated that they supported Viganò, among them Raymond Burke, a conservative cardinal, and Charles Joseph Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia. There was no precedent in the Church's modern history of such public support by a group of prelates who wanted the pope to resign. Behind this attack was an American media group, EWTN, founded in 1980 by a nun, Mary Angelica of the Annunciation (who died in 2016). This reaches some 250 million Catholics throughout the world and it also publishes the *National Catholic Register*, an online newspaper. One of EWTN's directors, the millionaire lawyer Timothy Busch, supported Viganò's offensive.[1] Together with the Republican billionaire Charles Koch, Busch was one of the promoters of the "theology of capitalism", a sort of ultra-liberal alternative to the "theology of liberation". In Busch's view, a new generation of Catholic NGOs created by powerful businessmen, like Legatus or the Napa Institute, was re-evangelising the country, while demonstrating at the same time that capitalism conformed to the Church's doctrine.

Legatus was created by the businessman Tom Monaghan, the founder of the Domino's Pizza restaurant chain; it financed anti-abortion campaigns and those aimed at the moral regeneration of the nation. The movement only admitted as members businessmen with a turnover of more than $7 million. In 1998 Monaghan handed over most of his company to an investment fund to endow his new offspring, the Ave Maria Foundation (which sought to develop nothing less than a town entirely dedicated to the Virgin Mary, with its own university), and an investment fund, the Ave Maria Mutual Fund. After Viganò's accusation, Legatus announced it had stopped contributing to the Holy See.

Since the 2000s, a real cultural war has been tearing the American Church apart. Though they willingly accepted Pope Benedict XVI, these theo-conservatives very quickly showed they were hostile to Francis. And the latter damaged his case by refusing to appoint certain ultra-conservative American prelates who thought that they were automatically destined to become cardinals. As the director of communications in the Vatican, Andrea Tornielli, emphasised, in the Viganò affair "the same strategies were used successfully against the Bishop of Rome by the media apparatus and the

American secret services as if preparing the terrain for impeachment procedures against political leaders or changes of regime in the world arena: international media campaigns, files of evidence, defamation and destroying reputations."[2]

In the autumn of 2018, another offensive was launched by a club of Catholic millionaires calling itself "Better Church Governance". Their project, entitled the Red Hat Report, consisted of having a hundred or so journalists, academics, private detectives and former FBI agents investigate cardinals likely to run for election at the next conclave. Evidently, this project sought to gather everything and anything that could compromise any future *papabili*. "If we had had the Red Hat Report earlier," it was said when the project was presented, "perhaps we'd not have Pope Francis today." The statement at least had the merit of being clear. At the same time Cardinal Parolin, the Secretary of State, was accused of being a "corrupt man", though the only basis for this was the allegations made by Viganò. For the first time in the history of the Church, a private secret service was thus created, dedicated to influencing the Vatican's future direction, and publicly supported by a group of ultra-rich Catholics, with an annual starting budget of more than $1 million. What would happen if the future pope wasn't the one this group wanted?

London calling

In June 2015, Francis created a new twelve-person financial auditing service and appointed Libero Milone, 67, to head it. For more than thirty years, he had worked for the auditing company Deloitte. This service had to supervise the auditing of the internal control procedures of all the congregations, including the Governorate of the Vatican City. It had to produce an annual audit report and carry out inspections of certain services at the request of the Council for Economic Affairs. Milone was thus the coping stone of a programme designed to modernise and manage the Vatican's economic and financial system, alongside Australian Cardinal Pell, the Secretary for the Economy, and the German Cardinal Reinhard Marx, coordinator of the Council for the Economy. But their work ran into resistance: some requests from the team to obtain copies of various contracts remained unanswered. An attempt was made to limit Milone's

access to the Pope. After several months, Milone's laptop was hacked. He lodged a complaint with the police.

Milone was suspicious about the hackers' motivations: for several weeks, he'd been asking for an explanation about hundreds of millions of dollars held in Vatican institutions in Switzerland which did not appear in the books. In 2014, the Vatican had transferred the sum of $200 million from its accounts in Switzerland to a Luxembourg investment fund, Athena Capital, which used this money to buy a minority holding in a building in Chelsea, London, in which Harrods head office was located. The building was owned by the manager of the fund, Raffaele Mincione, and the shareholding bought by the Vatican was sold to him for a much higher price than the buying price two years previously.

In 2017, there was great drama when Milone was dismissed. He was accused of espionage and misappropriation by Cardinal Becciu, the Secretariat's number two, who had approved the London transaction. Becciu justified this step by saying: "He was going against all the rules, he spied on the private lives of his superiors, including me. If he hadn't resigned, we would have sued him."[3] And he added in defence of his project: "It is current practice for the Holy See to invest in real estate; it has always done so, in Rome, in Paris, in Switzerland and also in London." Indeed, in principle all Holy See real estate is the responsibility of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See. More cautiously, the Secretary of State referred to an "opaque deal" that was being investigated. Milone, however, told another story: "The head of the police forced me to sign a resignation letter, which they had prepared weeks beforehand"—at Becciu's request. Who was one to believe? The problem was that these serious accusations against Milone were all dropped subsequently.

In 2016 Becciu held up the audit of all the Vatican accounts by PricewaterhouseCoopers ordered by the Secretariat for the Economy. He cancelled it and persuaded the Pope later to approve the decision. According to sources in the Secretariat for the Economy, in 2015 Becciu tried to disguise the loans in the Vatican accounts by cancelling their counterparts, namely the London property. This "creative" accounting technique was made illegal by new rules introduced in 2014. It was this manoeuvre that had given the alarm. In 2018, Becciu was appointed head of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints.

From the end of 2019, the revelations continued unabated. The Vatican police searched the offices of the Secretariat of State on 1 October. They seized files and computers dealing with the London investment. The next day there was a leak in the London press about a confidential memo announcing that five Vatican employees had been suspended “as a precaution”, including two department heads, Mgr Mauro Carlino, who was in charge of documentation in the Secretariat, and Tommaso Di Ruzza, director of the Financial Information Authority.

On 5 June 2020, an Italian businessman, Gianluigi Torzi, who had bought back from the Vatican its holding in the Chelsea building, was arrested by the Vatican police. Accused of extortion, embezzlement, fraud and laundering money, he risked twelve years in prison. Judicial phone-tapping, revealed by the *Corriere della Sera*, enabled his role to be understood more clearly:

> It is 19 December 2018 in a bedroom of the luxurious Hotel Bulgari in Milan. Three men are discussing and arguing about a Vatican investment which will create a scandal a year later: luxury property in the centre of London. They don’t know that what they are saying is being recorded. The first, Fabrizio Tirabassi, is a lay employee of the Secretariat of State of the Vatican, the central government of the Church; the second, Gianluigi Torzi, is a stockbroker and financial intermediary; and the third is the original manager of the finances of the Holy See, Enrico Crasso. The *Corriere della Sera* has revealed these recordings.
>
> We can hear in particular Fabrizio Tirabassi addressing Gianluigi Torzi: “It is possible that here, at the beginning of the year, everything will be centralised. It means that we, as the Secretariat of State, will lose control,” the Vatican employee explains. “This is not very good for you, Gianluigi!”
>
> “How can we recognise the work you have done,” he asks him.
>
> Gianluigi Torzi seems surprised and answers: “And must I leave? Completely?” Then very quickly he starts to ask for money: “OK, OK, get me out … But, Fabrizio, I want to be paid. I’m not going like that. I thought I would be managing there for three or four years.”[4]

These men were at the centre of the investment in the former Harrods head office in Chelsea.

In September 2020, the Vatican announced that Cardinal Becciu had been dismissed. He lost all the privileges attached to his rank, such as the

right to vote in forthcoming conclaves. It was the first time that a cardinal had been “degraded” since the McCarrick affair in 2018. Becciu protested his innocence and described his situation as “surreal”: “My conscience tells me that I am not corrupt,” he declared during a press conference.[5]

On 14 October 2020, Cecilia Marogna, who was close to Becciu and whom from time to time he introduced as his “niece”, was arrested in Milan. She was accused of receiving 500 000 euros in an account in Slovenia from funds intended for financing the Vatican’s parallel diplomacy in zones of conflict in Africa. This attractive 39-year-old Sardinian explained that she had worked as a mediator to assist the release of priests and nuns who had been kidnapped in Africa or Asia. The arrest warrant from the Vatican court mentioned embezzlement and, in addition to misappropriation, complicity with other people. Suspected of having spent several hundred thousand euros on handbags, furniture and luxury clothes, Marogna was finally extradited to the Vatican and appeared in court at her trial.[6] Nowadays, Becciu says that he was duped by the young woman.

Some of the cardinal’s friends believed his fall was caused by Cardinal Pell, who wanted to take revenge on those who made false accusations against him in Australia. In this regard, *Afrika Stratégies* reported: “The Vatican magistrates discovered strange 700 000 euro transfers to Australia. According to the investigators, the money came from the Secretariat of State and had been used to persuade a young Australian to give false testimony against George Pell. Angelo Becciu was already on his knees. George Pell did not allow him the honour of a fight but wouldn’t have hesitated to finish him off if he could have.”[7] The transfers were not confirmed by the Vatican courts and therefore have to be taken as hearsay.

On 18 November 2020, Becciu took the weekly *L’Espresso* to the civil courts and asked for 10 million euros, to be paid to charities, claiming the paper had damaged his reputation and his chances of becoming pope by saying that he had embezzled Vatican funds to enrich his family. This concerned the last of the accusations against him, that he sent a 600 000 euro subsidy to a Sardinian cooperative, managed by his brother, which took in migrants.

The immediate consequence of all these scandals was that Mgr Nunzio Galantino, the president of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See from 2018, became the Vatican’s new financial strongman, as from now

on he would have authority over the finances of the Secretariat of State. In theory, it was no longer possible for a prelate in the Curia to issue payments by himself. No longer would there be any hidden book-keeping in the Secretariat of State since everything would be centralised in the Administration of the Patrimony.

Giani's fall

Another unexpected consequence of this spate of affairs was that the head of the police force, Domenico Giani, had to resign on 14 October 2019. The official reason was that there had been a leak about the five Vatican employees being suspended provisionally, which had tarnished their reputation. Giani was not accused directly. "No personal responsibility," said the Vatican. And he received a personal visit from the Pope, a sign that his loyalty was not in doubt. However, many thought that the official reason was a little too trivial.

Some members of the Curia had doubts about his loyalty. Diat interviewed a cardinal who made serious accusations:

> I think, and I'm not alone in this, that Domenico Giani is one of the most serious cases of infiltration in the Holy See. In the Vatican, we experienced real acts of espionage during the Soviet period, in particular in the service of Moscow. But in none of these did it involve people with important responsibilities. Because of the human and logistic capabilities belonging to the police force, and because of the blind trust that the Secretary of State had in him, Domenico Giani possessed a large amount of confidential information. In order to serve a cause other than that of the papacy and in order to pursue a career outside the Holy See, Domenico Giani has been disloyal. He wanted to become a deputy general secretary of the United Nations, in charge of security. To realise this almost crazy ambition, he impressed people responsible outside the Vatican with his great zeal. But his candidature was not accepted.

In another attack, on 5 March 2013, during a general meeting, Cardinal Ivan Dias publicly accused Domenico Giani of belonging to the Freemasons. Obviously, the position Giani occupied and his zeal in tracking down delinquents—even going as far as to knock over a few eminences along the way—didn't make him many friends.

Giani played an important part in the dismissal of Libero Milone in 2017. According to the latter, his telephones were bugged and his computers pirated. It was no doubt the services of the police force who bugged the offices of the Secretariat for the Economy. In addition to the

office of the controller general, two devices were found in the offices of Cardinal Pell. One can imagine Pell was shocked by this.

Giani was therefore the tool of Cardinal Becciu, before he was used against the latter at the behest of the Vatican courts. Many prelates were not convinced he was conducting investigations right across the board on the "questions of sex, drugs, and above all money" during the Vatileaks scandals in 2012 and 2013. For some, Giani had become "the most powerful man in the Vatican", so much so that Secretary of State Parolin was worried. He had not been informed beforehand that his offices were going to be searched in October 2019, and this had caused keen embarrassment. The unprecedented raid marked the end of a taboo: the inviolability and omnipotence of the Secretariat. From then on, the slightest faux pas could bring him down.

Giani was replaced at the head of the police force by Gianluca Gauzzi Broccoletti, 45, who previously was deputy commandant of the police force. It was he who set up the Vatican's electronic cybersecurity and surveillance system.

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Cardinal Becciu's trial went from surprise to surprise. On 25 November 2022, the Italian press reported that Becciu had tried to trap Pope Francis by recording him without his knowledge in the summer of 2021, three days before the beginning of the trial, when the Pope had just returned after a serious colon operation. The step was unprecedented in the annals of the Vatican. On 24 July 2021, while telephoning the Pope, Becciu asked him to confirm the approval for the unblocking of funds to liberate a Colombian nun held in Mali by a group linked to al-Qaeda. "Did you authorise me or not to launch the operations to free the nun?" he asked, according to the transcription published by *Il Messaggero*. "We fixed the ransom at 500 000 euros, not more because it seemed immoral to give more money to the […] terrorists … I think that I told you about all this … Do you remember?" The Pope, who seemed perplexed, asked Becciu to make his request in writing. Nothing would have been known about this incident if the recording hadn't been found on the telephone of a relative of the cardinal by the Financial Guard in Oristano, which was investigating the management of the co-operative Spes, headed by Antonino, the brother of Cardinal Becciu. The

scandal involving the co-operative was enough to tarnish even further Becciu's reputation while he was awaiting his sentencing.

Finally on 16 December 2023, the Vatican criminal court condemned Cardinal Becciu in the first instance to five and a half years in prison and a fine of 8 000 euros. The Vatican court had called for a sentence of seven years and three months in prison. Becciu's lawyer said, "We respect the verdict but we will certainly appeal."

* * *

The account of this period in the Vatican's history, the most recent, can only be partial and provisional. Sources, archives and testimonies are obviously missing. By definition, some acts of the intelligence services are destined to remain secret for a long time to come. These limitations call for caution. However, it is still possible to learn from this particularly rich recent history. Beyond the doctrinal and personality differences, which are real, beyond the will of many conservatives to oppose the two popes, there are more elements of continuity than one could have imagined.

Although he was elected as the legitimate successor to John Paul II, Pope Benedict (whether he wanted to or not) showed a modern sense by renouncing the throne. He touched people's spirits so much so that his successor can mention the possibility of his becoming in turn "emeritus", without it causing any special reaction.[8] The difference is that Benedict, who died on 31 December 2022, seems to have admitted, by his abdication, that he was powerless when facing the nest of intrigue, blackmail and corruption which the Curia seems to have become; whereas Francis, who was less familiar with the Curia, has confronted it more directly. Both have had difficulty distinguishing who, around them, is really effective and honest. Both wanted to trust the prelates whom they had known for a long time and not condemn too quickly those in authority who gave rise to controversy. Both underestimated the power of the wheeler-dealers and the weaknesses in some of the prelates' lives.

Like his predecessor, Francis has been visibly groping in the dark, has made mistakes several times, but has also shown great tenacity. There is no doubt a risk in enumerating the affairs that are currently rocking the Vatican, and letting people think that there have been more scandals during

the recent pontificates than in past ones. In fact, this period has above all been one that has seen the end of *omertà*.

CONCLUSION

In the intelligence world, the Vatican is one of a kind, because of its hybrid status: it is a micro-state and, at the same time, a worldwide spiritual authority. For all that, it has never been absent from the geopolitical powers' "Big Game" and has often had to defend itself against espionage from all sides.

Its opaqueness and its taste for secrecy have made foreign intelligence services overestimate its power. It is true that its almost timeless structure hides an adaptable organisation, which it is not easy to assess from the outside (even for most Catholics, who are not very familiar with how the Curia works). This is the best protection against the indiscreet gaze of outsiders. But this opaqueness can also turn against the institution if it shields from outside attention wheeler-dealing, personal attacks or dirty tricks, always in the higher interests of the Church.

De facto, the Vatican is an absolute monarchy: there is no real counter-power to the pope's. On the other hand, the institution is capable of great inertia, a clannish spirit, and corporatism. From a great distance, it has to deal with such very different local situations that the rules often have their exceptions.

An alternative of the Church

Against this backdrop, the characters of the 20th-century popes have played a not negligible role in determining the means and strategies of secret action. Pius XII seemed like a true diplomat, very cerebral, a Germanophile and an anti-communist. He supported and developed the policy of secret activity in the Eastern bloc countries, which he had started while he was Secretary of State, so as to keep alive the Churches in the East and collect intelligence. The Jesuits spearheaded this programme in the 1930s and 1940s, when the main threat was that of Nazism.

Where Nazism was concerned, Pius was extremely cautious, but he did have secret discussions with high ranking anti-Hitlerian officers and fostered initiatives within the Church that saved refugees and Jews. Obsessed with being a central force, capable of negotiating a possible peace agreement, he assumed an untenable official balancing role between the Allies and the Axis countries, with results that damaged his reputation. In parallel, with the assistance of Cardinal Spellman, he built an alliance with the new American power, from both a financial and intelligence point of view. After Nazism was defeated and even more so after the defeat of the Communist Party in the Italian 1948 elections, the Vatican became a member of the grand anti-communist coalition in its own right. Its activities brought it closer to those of the Western secret services: building up secret funds, training and parachuting priest-agents into the East, logistical support for Stay Behind networks and former Nazis departing for South America, information exchanges, and assistance for the European services and the CIA. It did end up, however, realising that it had failed. The Churches in the East remained under the tight control of the communist regimes and the Vatican was obviously penetrated, not so much at the top but at the bottom, in particular in the special operations groups like the Russicum.

Pope John XXIII presented another diplomatic profile, a little more pastoral, less cerebral and dogmatic. He started by acknowledging that the strategy of opposing communism directly had failed and tried to initiate a more conciliatory policy. Either by temperament or from lack of time, he didn’t try to reform the Curia or the overall direction of the secret operations. Alongside his great undertaking for internal reform, enshrined in Vatican II, he preferred to establish external networks without his own Curia knowing. From a diplomatic viewpoint, he scored many successes, calmed tension between Moscow and Washington, and obtained several concessions for the clergy. His diplomatic heritage was to be seen in the

Ostpolitik, embodied in Cardinal Casaroli, up to the beginning of the 1980s. Such an assessment nonetheless has its limits. What he achieved can be seen as more of a rebalancing than a reversal because during that time secret operations continued on both sides, in particular on the part of the Eastern bloc services, which didn't let up.

Paul VI was a pure product of the Curia, who had, despite himself, acquired pastoral experience as Archbishop of Milan. He also knew much about secret affairs, since he had been in charge of several sensitive dossiers as Pius XII's deputy. He knew all the family secrets, and didn't need anyone to tell him what the stakes were, and what threats existed, or what means he had at his disposal. Continuing with Vatican II and the Ostpolitik, he approved clandestine operations that were refocused on material and moral support for the Churches of the East, organising real smuggling networks. After having been eclipsed for a period under John XXIII, the CIA found its mark again and re-established working relations with some members of the Curia. During his pontificate, Paul VI made several mistakes when recruiting senior officials, with dire consequences, especially Sindona and Marcinkus. He was also a hostage to a very troubled Italian political context, caught as he was between terrorism on the far right and the far left, the Mafia's wheeler-dealing, and various American operators manipulating Italian politics.

John Paul II was the best-trained pope as far as secret operations were concerned and the most determined that the Church should find itself at the end of the 1970s. It was he who knew communism's weaknesses best and knew best how to work with the system without going so far as an open conflict. The weapon he deployed to administer shocks to the communist system consisted mainly of Eastern bloc prelates, who were assisted by allied organisations like the tentacular Opus Dei. He received devoted support from the Reagan administration—an alliance of convenience, at an unheard of but also unilateral level, just as if the American services had lined up behind the Pope's banner, without claiming to lead the alliance, in return for his outright suppression of the promoters of the theology of liberation in their South American backyard.

The creation of the trade union Solidarity and the attempt on his life in Saint Peter's Square helped catalyse an increasing range of secret activities. In the 1980s, it was no use for the Eastern services to intensify their infiltration of the Church and try to undermine it with any real success. The

Pope operated almost by himself and he alone held an overall view of his organisation. He was the only pontiff to involve himself so much in the secret war of the 20th century—and win. History credits him, rightly, with a central role in the collapse of communism, even though this part of his clandestine activity is still not well known.

This immense geopolitical upheaval was exorbitantly costly. John Paul II took the Curia as he found it, making alterations to it bit by bit and installing his own shadow army inside the Vatican. His authority and his charisma were such that all these people worked and lived together apparently without clashing, despite the Poles' and Italians' different lifestyles. Weakened by the scandals, Marcinkus managed to save his neck by presenting himself as the devoted and inventive financier of this secret war. It was up to the Curia to deal with the rest: material, financial or legal matters were of no interest to John Paul II. It is not known when he realised the role the Mafia was taking in the Vatican's financial affairs and in those of certain prelates (not to mention the attempt on his life). But it was only in 1989 that he appeared to want to confront it openly.

For his part, Mikhail Gorbachev, by dealing with the agony of the Soviet system peacefully, did something terrible: he deprived the Vatican of its main enemy. Although John Paul II was still there until the middle of the 2000s, his declining health, his disdain for administration and his blind trust in his immediate entourage encouraged the emergence of an increasingly lowering atmosphere: internecine warfare, wheeling and dealing, cover-ups of scandals, priests murdered in crisis-ridden countries. The real skills developed during the secret war against communism did not seem to have been reinvested elsewhere, as if they would be of no use in the world afterwards.

The heir apparent, Benedict XVI, thought he could hold on to the heritage of John Paul II, at the same time correcting its most blatant abuses. Despite his reputation for being an inflexible doctrinarian, he appeared to be shaken by his own Curia, which didn't seem to revere him as much as John Paul II, and he was visibly disarmed by the violence of the internal conflicts and the scandals. His unprecedented renunciation of supreme power was perhaps the only gesture that he could make to distinguish himself from other prelates, whether friends or enemies, still obsessed with power.

It was therefore up to Francis to reform the Curia in a thoroughgoing way, though he did not know it as well as the others. It is always dangerous to prod a nest of vipers with a stick. As far as intelligence was concerned, Francis had to deal with the inherent contradiction created by a tool which performed increasingly better and better from a technical point of view. His experience of life in a dictatorship and his philosophy forbade him to use it for anything that would make it look like a political police force. From another point of view, for the Church, it was a vital issue—getting some order back into its own hierarchy—if it didn't want any more faithful to be disillusioned. On a daily basis it was therefore not easy to pinpoint the difference between respect for the prelates and what were legitimate investigations. We can already credit Francis with taking over power, no doubt groping around a bit, not necessarily completing but determined to continue what he had started. Bergoglio will no doubt not be seen in future as the revolutionary pope that many dreamt about and others feared, but rather as a cautious, modest and charismatic reformer, at ease with modern communications, capable of finding the right gestures and the right words (at least in the first years of his pontificate).

An actor apart from the "Big Game"

We hope that we have shown how much the Vatican was a unique power in the intelligence world. It had special advantages which no doubt played a large part in the victories it won in the 20th century. It is striking to observe the respect that the pope and his administration inspired both in the Vatican's allies and in its sworn enemies. It was this respect that dissuaded Hitler from invading the Vatican; that persuaded American presidents that it was better not to bother the pope with obscure financial stories or escape channels for former Nazis; that brought Kennedy and Khrushchev together to solve their Cuban differences peacefully; that led the Reagan administration to put the assistance of the NSA and the CIA at the disposal of the pope in respect of the Eastern bloc. As for the guys on the other side, it is our belief, based on all the sources available to date, that the Soviet leaders had no serious plan for an assassination attempt on John Paul II. After communism collapsed, although the influence of the Vatican seemed to fall off, and although Catholicism had lost market share especially to the Evangelical churches, the Church nonetheless did score some successes.

The unexpected rapprochement between Cuba and the United States came about because of the mutual trust both protagonists had in Pope Francis and in the institution of the Church. Other secret diplomatic activities, including support for persecuted churches in various countries, are still in progress, and it is too soon to talk about them.

This respect for the pope also applies by extension to the men and women of the Church. It is striking to observe the relative ease with which John Paul II's emissaries were able to move about from Rome to Poland, their pockets and suitcases full of money and goods that didn't have much to do with religion.

That the Vatican lacked a clearly identifiable foreign intelligence service and that its structures were difficult to understand was, as we have said already, sometimes an advantage. If you obtain the means, you can "penetrate" the Vatican, but you do have to know where to look and whom to listen to. The restricted number of senior "civil servants", the compartmentalisation (strengthened by jealousies and suspicion), and the culture of secrecy all enabled the Vatican machine to work under John Paul II, even allowing for a few moles and microphones.

For all that, there are many weaknesses, and this vulnerability should not be hidden. They have been the reason for many failures and a few tragedies. If all the priests and prelates who have met a violent end since this history began are added together, we reach a huge number, especially in relation to the Vatican's size. Certainly, overall there were violent deaths during the Cold War, but not as many as one is sometimes led to believe. The Eastern bloc services killed more of their own dissidents than Western agents. And the CIA, despite its fierce reputation, has limited itself to a few Marxist leaders.[1]

The most striking weakness was the relative amateurism of the "Vatican spies". Their activities were quite often improvised, especially in the first decades. The first priests sent to the Eastern bloc countries were not seriously trained for the job. It seems that things evolved after World War II, thanks to training given with the help of the CIA, the Italian and French services, and no doubt others. Today the Vatican has no hesitation in recruiting externally for highly specialised skills; it doesn't really have a choice when it is confronted with cyber-attacks, for example. It remains to

be said that many priests carried out secret missions alongside their official activities, for which they had to get along on their own.

The Vatican's main vulnerabilities in the intelligence war were those of the priests themselves. Those familiar with the intelligence world know the acronym MICE well enough (Money, Ideology, Compromise, Ego), which summarises very well the levers used to recruit people from the other side. *Money* was rarely used by the Eastern services because the huge majority of priests would not have betrayed their faith and their hierarchy for a few material advantages. On the other hand, managing the Vatican's "secret funds" has been a source of repeated "losses of control". At the beginning, the Vatican bank, the IOR, was created to shelter part of the Church's patrimony when it was faced with the risk of being occupied by the Axis forces. Subsequently it developed quickly together with American finance. But post-war it also became an enabler of tax evasion, a source of easy money credits. A fateful step was taken by the infernal duo of Sindona and Marcinkus, who launched the IOR into the troubled waters of money laundering and international speculation. The ratio of cost to profits for these excesses meant that until 1989 it could be tolerated. From then on, it seemed extraordinarily difficult to close this financial Pandora's box, just as it seemed difficult for some members of the Secretariat of State to give up the alluring seductions of secret funds.

We can pass over *Ideology* quickly (political and religious convictions) as sincere faith was usually incompatible with totalitarian ideology. There were certainly a few exceptions, like the philo-Nazi bishop Alois Hudal, but they were isolated. With hindsight, the theology of liberation was not a grassroots movement as the CIA or the most conservative members of the Curia feared at the time. It can be seen partly as a reaction to the blind repression of South American dictatorships, which was adroitly exploited by the Eastern bloc services. If the communist regimes had set themselves up for the long term, like Cuba, it is quite probable that sooner or later sympathetic priests would have been persecuted.

Compromise concerned the heart of the problem, namely the private lives of priests. Here we can mention the examples of family connivance and parents with illegal activities, notably in regions like Sicily. The size of this problem was limited. Quite another matter was the failure to adhere to the obligations of celibacy. It's not our intention here to enumerate the cases of affairs or lasting liaisons, both heterosexual and homosexual, or make

any statement on the evolution of the rule of celibacy. On the other hand, it is undeniable that this phenomenon has always been significant, that it is still present today, and that it is the weakest point exploited by foreign services so that they can manipulate the Church. Everybody has used it: secret services, both Italian and Nazi, the KGB and others from the East, the South American political police, and the Western services. To this reality must be added the particular cases of paedophilia, which we know nowadays have been widespread. But there was no reason for private interest groups, with the means, to investigate the clerics concerned or attempt to blackmail some of them.

Finally, *Ego* (Vanity) has no doubt been neglected as a force in the past. But the most recent affairs show us to what extent it can be powerful. Sanctimoniously, we wonder who manipulates today the former nuncio living in the United States, Archbishop Viganò, and what means were used to make such an experienced prelate dare to ask for the head of Pope Francis.

Only by understanding the culture of the Vatican itself can we explain certain attitudes when looking at some of the big issues of recent decades. We are struck by the Vatican's apparent passivity or even inertia when faced with priests being assassinated in sensitive political contexts. There are many examples: El Salvador, Algeria, Burundi and so on. Only the actions of those close to the victims, the heads of their orders or the NGOs, permit some light to be thrown on these incidents. The institution itself seems indifferent. Everything happens as though the Church considers it quite normal to have new martyrs regularly. It was as if holding a government accountable risks threatening the position of the Church in the country concerned. This "realpolitik" derives from an old tradition, but it has become more and more difficult to accept it.

The relation to time remains essential for an understanding of the way the Vatican acts. Modern secret services think in terms of months and years; the Vatican in decades, if not centuries. For the Vatican, it is normal for a mission or negotiation started under one pope to reach its conclusion two or three popes later. Caution is a definite imperative, hurrying almost a sin. This is why even if there are strategic or doctrinal variations from one pope to another, the sense of continuity predominates.

The challenges of the future

Because we don't have complete sources, it would be idle to make definitive judgements about what "Vatican spies" are and what they do today. On the other hand, it is possible to offer some perspective on the big questions of the future concerning intelligence, those which future popes will have to answer. It seems that there would be more advantages than disadvantages for the Vatican to provide itself with a proper foreign intelligence service, rather than to carry on case by case with its DIY system. Given all the scandals over the last decades, the faithful can understand why the Vatican, like any other state, needs to protect itself, on the one hand, and to compare and increase the information it receives from its nunciatures and missionary orders, on the other. Sometimes, even, it has to investigate discreetly without going through the Caudine forks of local authorities. The goal of course is to organise intelligence activity so as to avoid excesses. This will not prevent popes from continuing to use people close to them for dealing with sensitive affairs. It also means that its professionalism has to be improved. There are limits to what priests can be entrusted with. Then again, if the honesty of certain prelates is not assured, it would be extremely dangerous to leave the initiative for intelligence gathering to private actors with hidden motivations.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need for the Vatican to set up a viable, stable and efficient financial surveillance system because the endless succession of corruption affairs sabotages the work of the popes and reduces the Church's margins for action while at the same time damaging its reputation. Another vital question which future popes will have to deal with is that of the "second circle"—the various Catholic orders and organisations which are not under the Vatican's direct authority, but whose misdemeanours can also tarnish it. Finally, there is an irony in that the Vatican goes in for intelligence work but does not have an intelligence culture. You have to know how to look directly at your own history rather than avoid it or diminish it.

Cyber-war and digital espionage represent a massive trend already, one that advances constantly, as the former director of the Vatican security services, Domenico Giani, has already recognised. This means that the Vatican will not be able to avoid making large investments, for itself and also for the nunciatures and even for all the clergy. If it doesn't, it will be

exposing itself to more and more public scandals (both big and small), which public opinion will view with increasing suspicion. Today, on the other hand, we can see a real war of information involving social networks, in which conspiracy groups like QAnon have no reservations in broadcasting “fake news” about the pope, without any risk of retaliation. For matters like these that concern the military general staffs and the Western services, the Vatican will need to find some allies for itself and define a policy.

Much has been said about the Mafia’s role in various affairs in which the Church was involved during the 20th century, sometimes in connection with the Christian Democrats. It is important to remember that the Mafia, which was greatly weakened after Mussolini’s reign ended, got back in the saddle thanks to the Roosevelt administration, which didn’t look too closely at its allies of the moment when it was a question of freeing Europe from Nazism. But the alliance of the moment became permanent when it was a question of mounting a large anti-communist coalition. In various ways the Vatican was contaminated by this unnatural alliance and paid dearly for it on several occasions. For all that, our research has convinced us that there is still much to learn about these interactions and about the past and present significance of the different branches of the Mafia. The work of the anti-Mafia judges provides a valuable source, but we know how much it was hindered by a section of the Italian political classes. This means that we still underestimate today the hold it has, not to mention the Mafia from other countries (such as Russia and Turkey) with which it cooperates. Since the Vatican is well set in Italy, its security risks can never be separated from its Italian and, more widely, its European interests.

The next popes will be increasingly less Italian and more often from outside Europe. The internationalisation of the College of Cardinals had been going on since Paul VI. From a strict demographic point of view, the pastoral concerns of the future heads of the Church will mostly be focused on other continents. However, they will not be able to ignore the fact that they are also at the head of a European micro-state. Europe is forced to conceive of its security in the context of the interdependence between clearly divergent services and interests.[2] Consequently the Vatican will have to develop cooperation with other services, in such a way that it will be neither subordinated nor aligned. One can get on perfectly well on certain

matters and not on others. It is the common lot of intelligence services today.

* * *

As the objects of all kinds of fantasies, “Vatican spies” populate fiction to the point that they have become a sort of separate species: they don’t have much to do with the realities we have come across in this book. The people in our story, who are terribly human, are both heirs to an old tradition and often inexperienced; they are sometimes as heroic as they are vulnerable, animated by a sense of sacrifice but also by a need for recognition. They reflect the Vatican itself: a nest of paradoxes.

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Various former intelligence officers of several nationalities who had to work with the Vatican supplied me with valuable explanations. They prefer to remain anonymous: may they rest assured of my gratitude.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

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3. Jefferson Morley, *The Ghost: The Secret Life of CIA Spymaster James Jesus Angleton*, St. Martin's Press, 2017. See also Gérald Arboit, *James Angleton: Le contre-espion de la CIA*, Nouveau Monde Editions, 2007.
4. Morley, *The Ghost*.
5. David Talbot, *The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, the CIA and the Rise of America's Secret Government*, HarperCollins, 2015
6. See Martin Quigley, *Peace without Hiroshima: Secret Action at the Vatican in the Spring of 1945*, Madison Books, 1991.
7. Gowen Report, 18 September 1945, NARA, RG 59/250/36/27, box 4016, 761.00/9–1846, quoted by Aarons and Loftus, *Unholy Trinity*.
8. Report *La Vista* of 15 May 1947, NARA, RG 59, 250/36/29/2, box 4080.
9. See Yvonnick Denoël, *Les faux-monnayeurs d'Hitler*, Sang-Froid no. 11, 2018.
10. *Der Spiegel*, no. 6, 1984.
11. Letter from Hudal to Perón, 34 August 1948, Collegio Santa Maria dall'Anima, Hudal Foundation, box 27, quoted by Gerald Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run: How Hitler's Henchmen Fled Justice*, Oxford University Press, 2011.
12. Alois Hudal, *Römische Tagebücher*, Stocker, 1976.
13. Notably his memoirs *Römische Tagebücher*.
14. Archive created by Hansjakob Stehle in *Die Zeit*, no. 4, 1984.
15. Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*.
16. NARA, RG 263, shelf 230, row 86, compartment 22, shelf 04, box 28; GDWN, 0876.

17. Report quoted by Uki Goni, *The Real Odessa: Smuggling the Nazis to Perón's Argentina*, Granta, 2002.
18. Reports by Agents William Gowen and Louis Canigha, Counter Intelligence Corps, Rome, 29 August 1947, NARA, RG 319, box 173, file IRR XE001 109.
19. Report on WWII, Victim Gold, 29 April 1998, Botschafter Stuart Eisenstadt, Report RG 263 (CIA), name files, box 12, quoted by Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*.
20. Magnus Linklater et al., *The Nazi Legacy: Klaus Barbie and the International Fascist Connection*, Rinehart and Winston, 1984.
21. Secret letter no. 144 from the Ambassador of Argentina to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Juan Bramuglia, 13 June 1946, revealed by the CEANA Commission, quoted by Goni, *The Real Odessa*.
22. See Osborne to Foreign Office, dated 27 August 1945, PRO FO 171 371/48920 R14525, quoted by Goni, *The Real Odessa*.
23. Message dated 27 March 1946, PRO WO 204/1113.
24. Message from Colville to Osborne, dated 14 May 1947, FO 371/67376 R6058.
25. Goni, *The Real Odessa*.
26. CIA file "Organization of the Ustasha Abroad", 4 November 1946, quoted by Goni, *The Real Odessa*.
27. Memorandum dated 12 July 1948 at the HQ of the American forces in Austria by the HQ of the 430th Detachment of the CICV: "Ratline Austria–South America", quoted by Aarons and Loftus, *Unholy Trinity*.
28. Christopher Simpson, *Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects on the Cold War*, Grove Press, 1988.
29. Report by Gowen dated 22 March 1948, Vajta file of the CIC.
30. Sylvaine Guinle-Lorinet, *De Vichy à la fin de la guerre*, The Tisserant–d'Ormesson Correspondence (1940–1971), https://blogs.univ-tlse2.fr/grhi/sylvaine-guinle-lorinet/.
31. See Goni, *The Real Odessa*.

5. NO HOLDS BARRED, 1949–1958

1. On these parachute operations, see in particular the account by Harry Rositzke, *The CIA's Secret Operations*, Routledge, 2019.
2. December 1949, cited by Pascal Krop, *Les secrets de l'espionnage français*, Lattès, 1993.
3. Report dated October 1945, USNA, Archive of the Strategic Office, XL 2418, cited by Marek Aarons and John Loftus, *Unholy Trinity: The Vatican, The Nazis and the Swiss Banks*, St. Martin's Press, 1992.
4. See Frédéric Charpier, *Les valets de la guerre froide: Comment la République a recyclé les collabos*, François Bourin, 2013.
5. SHD/DITEEX, 3 K 71, oral account by Bob Maloubier, 19 October 2000, IX (12 AV 456), cited by Gérald Arboit, *Des services secrets pour la France: Du dépôt de la guerre à la DGSE (1856–2013)*, CNRS Editions, 2014.
6. A former Nazi secret service agent on the Eastern Front.
7. For the details country by country, see Owen Chadwick, *The Christian Church in the Cold War*, Allen Lane, 1992.
8. See the account by the defector Peter Deriabin, *Inside Stalin's Kremlin: An Eyewitness Account of Brutality, Duplicity and Intrigue*, University of Nebraska Press, 1998.
9. See Danièle and Pierre de Villemarest, *Le KGB au coeur du Vatican*, Editions de Paris, 2006.
10. Erwin Weit, *Eyewitness: The Autobiography of Gomulka's Interpreter*, Deutsch, 1973.
11. Sergio Trasatti, *Vatican–Kremlin: Les secrets d'un face-à-face*, Edition Payot, 1995.
12. Hansjakob Stehle, *Eastern Politics of the Vatican, 1917–1979*, Ohio University Press, 1981.

13. Dermot Keogh, “Ireland, the Vatican and the Cold War: The Case of Italy, 1948”, *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1991.
14. James E. Miller, “Taking Off the Gloves: The United States and the Italian Election of 1948”, *Diplomatic History*, vol. 7, no. 1, Winter 1983.
15. Memorandum of a discussion between Graham Parsons and Mgr G.B. Montini, Vatican City, 1 October 1947, 124 AmVat, RG 84, NARS; Parsons to State Department, Vatican City, 24 October 1947, “800 Political Affairs”, Myron Taylor Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York; FRUS, 1948, 3:753, cited in Miller, “Taking Off the Gloves”.
16. Alden Hatch, *Pope Paul VI*, Random House, 1966.
17. Assigned to the CIA’s OSO (Office of Special Operations), Angleton led Team A, heading up intelligence collection abroad. The archives of the former OSS’s X2 Service were transferred to him. He had barely had time to organise the service before he was sent back to Italy.
18. William Colby, *Honorable Men: My Life in the CIA*, Simon and Schuster, 1978.
19. Tim Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, Anchor Books, 2008.
20. *The Observer*, 18 November 1990, cited by Daniel Ganser, *NATO’s Secret Army: Operation Gladio and Terrorism in Western Europe*, Frank Cass, 2004.
21. Meeting with author.
22. *Gladio: The Puppeteers* by Allan Francovich, BBC2 documentary, 17 June 1972.
23. See *Dossier SIFAR*, Kaos Edizioni, 2004.
24. *Commizione parlamentare d’inchiesta sugli eventi del giugno-luglio 1964: Relazione di minoranza*, Rome, 1971.
25. See Yvonnick Denoël, *Les dossiers noirs de Donald Trump*, Nouveau Monde Editions, 2019.
26. Douglas Waller, *Wild Bill Donovan: The Spymaster Who Created OSS and Modern American Espionage*, Free Press, 2012.
27. See especially André Kervella, *Le réseau Jade*, Nouveau Monde Editions, 2021.
28. This radical anti-communist, close to Joseph Caillaux and then Marcel Déat, had been a sympathiser of the Rassemblement National Populaire without actually belonging to it during the Occupation; this enabled him to resume his career with the Parti Radical after the war. As a director of various companies, he backed Georges Albertini’s anti-communist organisation.
29. https://www.comdos.bg/%d0%9d%d0%b0%d1%88%d0%b8%d1%82%d0%b5%20%d0%b8%d0%b7%d0%b4%d0%b0%d0%bd%d0%b8%d1%8f/darzhavna-sigurnost-i-veroizpovedani-yata-chast-ii-myusyulmansko-izpovedanie-i-katolicheska-tsarkva-v-balgariya-1944–1991.
30. This was Boleslav Sloskan (1893–1981), one of the bishops consecrated secretly by d’Herbigny in 1926 in Moscow. After being arrested by the Russian services in 1927, he was exchanged for a Russian spy held by the Lithuanians in 1933 and settled in Rome. See his official bibliography: http://www.sloskas.com/.
31. The Pontifical Nepomucene College in Rome.
32. Pierre de Villemarest, *L’espionnage soviétique en France, 1944–1969*, Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1969.
33. Paul Hoffmann, O *Vatican! A Slightly Wicked View of the Holy See*, Congdon and Weed, 1984.

6. DÉTENTE

1. See Philippe Chenaux, *Le temps du Vatican II: Une introduction à l’historie du Concile*, DDB, 2012.
2. Roland Flamini, *Pope, Premier, President*, Macmillan, 1980. See also Cardinal Louis F. Capovilla, *Mes années avec le Pape Jean XXIII: Conversations with Ezio Bolis*, Editions des Béatitudes, 2014.
3. See Chapter 5.
4. See Flamini, *Pope, Premier, President*.

5. Flamini, *Pope, Premier, President*.
6. Flamini, *Pope, Premier, President*.
7. Frédéric Charpier, *Les valets de la guerre froide: Comment la République a recyclé les collabos*, F. Bourin, 2013.
8. "Les missions secrets de Me Jean Violet", *Le Monde*, 28 December 1983.
9. See Roger Faligot, "Les services secrets français neutralisent l'ONU", in *Histoire secrète de la Ve République*, La Découverte, 2006.
10. Jean-Michel Barrault and Jacques Henri, *Vade-mecum du parfait agent secret*, Arthaud, 1972.
11. Or Opus Dei.
12. See Faligot, "Les services secrets français neutralisent l'ONU".
13. Testimony of Constantin Melnik taken down by the author.
14. See Erich Schmidt-Eenboom, Christoph Franceschini and Thomas Wegener Friis, *Spionage unter Freunden: Partnerdienstbeziehubgen und Westaufklärung der Organisation Gehlen und des BND*, Ch Links Verlag, 2017.
15. Hansjakob Stehle, *Eastern Politics of the Vatican, 1917–1979*, Ohio University Press, 1981.
16. See John Cooney, *The American Pope: The Life and Times of Francis, Cardinal Spellman*, Times Books, 1984.

7. PAUL VI'S TORMENTS

1. See Benny Lai, *Les secrets du Vatican*, Hachette, 1983.
2. For a good example of a missionary father and intelligence agent in Asia, see Jean-François Klein, "Le Sten et la Bible: Le Père Noël Tenaud (1904–1961), missionaire et agent de la France au Laos", in Olivier Forcade and Sebastien Laurent (eds.), *Le secret du pouvoir: L'approche française du renseignement XVII–XXI siècles*, Nouveau Monde Editions, 2019.
3. See Jonathan Kwitny, *Man of the Century*, Henry Holt, 1997.
4. Flamini, *Pope, Premier, President*.
5. See in particular *L'Espresso* of 14 and 21 May, 16 July, 24 September and 1 October 1967. Also Alessandro Giacone, "Le plan 'Solo', anatomie d'un 'coup d'état'", *Parlements: Revue d'histoire politique*, 2009.
6. Telegram IN68498, sent by the US Embassy in Rome on 26 June 1963, quoted by Maurizio Molinari and Paolo Mastrolilli, "A che golpe giochiamo?", *La Stampa*, 29 January 2004.
7. See *La Repubblica*, 12 December 1990.
8. *Relazione della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sugli eventi del giugno-luglio 1964*, Rome, 1971, quoted by Regine Igel, *Andreotti: Eine italienische Karriere zwischen Geheimdienst und Mafia*, Herbig, 1997; and Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy*, Universe, 2002.
9. See Éric Lebec, *Histoire secrete de la diplomatie vaticane*, Albin Michel, 1997.
10. Author's meeting with Constantin Melnik.
11. Quoted by Lebec, *Histoire secrete de la diplomatie vaticane*.

8. THE VATICAN MOLES

1. See Chapter 5.
2. Claude Clément, *L'affaire des fuites, objectif Mitterrand*, Olivier Orban, 1980.
3. Pierre de Villemarest, *L'espionnage soviétique en France, 1944–1969*, Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1969.
4. Villemarest, *L'espionnage soviétique en France*.
5. Służba Bezpieczeństwa.

6. John Koehler, *Spies in the Vatican: The Soviet Union's Cold War against the Church*, Pegasus Books, 2009.
7. Quoted in Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin.
8. Quoted in Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West*, Allen Lane, 1999.
9. Koehler, *Spies in the Vatican*.
10. I used John Koehler's analysis of the file from the Stasi archives.

9. OCTOPUS DEI

1. Yvon Le Vaillant, *Sainte Maffia: Le dossier de l'Opus Dei*, Mercure de France, 1971.
2. Thierry Oberlé, *L'Opus Dei: Dieu ou César?*, J.C. Lattès, 1993.
3. Robert Hutchinson, *Their Kingdom Come: Inside the Secret World of Opus Dei*, Doubleday, 1997.
4. Le Vaillant, *Sainte Maffia*.
5. See "Their Will Be Done", *Mother Jones*, July–August 1983.
6. Alvaro Puga, *Diario de vida de Ud*; see Fred Landis, "Opus Dei: Secret Order Vies for Power", *Covert Action*, Winter 1983.
7. Michael Walsh, *Opus Dei: An Investigation into the Powerful Secretive Society within the Catholic Church*, HarperOne, 2004.
8. Interview with the author.
9. Giuliano Ferrari, *Vaticanisme*, Perret-Gentil, 1976.
10. Hutchinson, *Their Kingdom Come*.
11. Penny Lernoux, *Cry of the People: The United States' Involvement in the Rise of Fascism, Torture and Murder and the Persecution of the Catholic Church in Latin America*, Doubleday, 1980.
12. See Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West*, Allen Lane, 1999.
13. Published by *Der Spiegel* in December 1980.
14. Quoted by Pierre Péan, *V: Enquête sur l'affaire des avions renifleurs et ses ramifications proches ou lointaines*, Fayard, 1984.
15. Péan, *V*.
16. Péan, *V*.

10. THE MONSIGNOR'S EXPLOSIVES

1. "Israelis Arrest Greek Catholic Archbishop on Weapons Charges", *New York Times*, 19 August 1974.
2. See Yeshayahu Ben Porat, Eitan Haber and Zeev Schiff, *Entebbe Rescue*, Delacorte Press, 1977; and William Stevenson and Uri Dan, *90 Minutes at Entebbe: The Full Inside Story of the Spectacular Israeli Counterterrorism Strike and the Daring Rescue of 103 Hostages*, Skyhorse, 2015.
3. The liberation agreement stipulated that Archbishop Capucci would never be reassigned to the Middle East and as a result he was sent to Latin America. In January 1979, he nonetheless returned to Damascus to help in a meeting of the PLO's National Council. John Paul II then transferred him to Western Europe. Capucci visited Americans held in the United States Embassy in Iran in 1979; he accompanied the bodies of eight American soldiers killed in an unsuccessful mission to free the hostages; he went to Iraq in 1990 to ask Saddam Hussein's government to free a group of Italians after the invasion of Kuwait. He died in 2017.
4. See Y. Denoël, *Les guerres secrètes du Mossad*, Nouveau Monde Editions, 2024.

5. See Gordon Thomas, *Gideon's Spies: The Secret History of the Mossad*, St. Martin's Griffin, 2015.
6. Direzione Investigazioni Generali e Operazioni Speciali.

11. SETTING THE CAT AMONG THE PIGEONS

1. Luigi DiFonzo, *St Peter's Banker: Michele Sindona*, Franklin Watts, 1983.
2. Quoted by DiFonzo, *St Peter's Banker*.
3. DiFonzo, *St Peter's Banker*.
4. Nick Tosches, *Power on Earth: Michele Sindona's Explosive Story*, Arbor House, 1986.
5. Tosches, *Power on Earth*.
6. Pino Arlacchi, *Addio Cosa Nostra: La vita di Tommaso Buscetta*, Rizzoli, 1994.
7. According to the Pike congressional inquiry in 1976, the American government also sent $10 million to the Christian Democrats in 1972. A good part of this transited through Sindona's banks. See https://archive.org/details/PIkeCommitteeRepôrts/Interception%20of%20International%20Telecommunixcationby%20the%20National%20Security%20Agency
8. DiFonzo, *St Peter's Banker*.
9. See Nick Tosches, *Power on Earth*.

12. THE PUPPET MASTER

1. See Luigi DiFonzo, *St Peter's Banker: Michele Sindona*, Franklin Watts, 1983.
2. DiFonzo, *St Peter's Banker*.
3. DiFonzo, *St Peter's Banker*.
4. *Relazione della Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sulla loggia massonica P2*, Rome, 1984.
5. Jack Green and Alessandro Massignani, *The Black Prince and the Sea Devils: The Story of Valerio Borghese and the Elite Units of the Decima MAS*, Da Capo Press, 2004.
6. See especially Stuart Christie, *Stefano Delle Chiaie: Portrait of a Black Terrorist*, Christie Books, 1984.
7. *L'Espresso*, 8 February 1976, quoted by Philip Willan, *Puppetmasters: The Political Use of Terrorism in Italy*, Universe, 2002.
8. See Willan, *Puppetmasters*.
9. Willan, *Puppetmasters*.

13. THE IOR CHANGES HORSES

1. See Paolo Cucchiarelli and Aldo Giannuli, *Lo stato parallelo*, Gamberetti Editore, 1997, quoted by Philip Willan, *The Vatican at War*, Universe, 2013.
2. Incidentally, this building belonged to the Società Generale Immobiliare, of which the Vatican was a shareholder alongside Sindona.

14. PAUL VI'S LAST SORROW

1. A scandal after corruption was discovered among the management of the Lockheed aerospace group between the end of the 1950s and the 1970s. It had repercussions in several European countries, especially in Italy. In the United States, it led the company to the brink of bankruptcy.
2. Philippe Foro, *L'affaire Aldo Moro*, Vendémiaire, 2013.
3. Ferdinando Imposimato, *Un juge en Italie*, Editions de Fallois, 2000.
4. Ferdinando Imposimato, *155 giorni che hanno cambiato l'Italia*, Newton Compton, 2013, quoted by Foro, *L'affaire Aldo Moro*. See also Ferdinando Imposimato and Sandro Provvisionato, *Doveva morire*, Chiarelettere, 2008.
5. Imposimato, *Un juge en Italie*.

6. Michael Busse and Maria-Rosa Bobbi, *Aldo Moro: Anatomy of a Crime*, Arte, 1993.
7. Quoted in Emmanuel Amara, *Nous avons tué Aldo Moro*, Patrick Robin Editions, 2003.

15. THE POPE WHO SHOULDN'T HAVE DIED

1. David Yallop, *In God's Name: An Investigation into the Murder of Pope John Paul I*, Bantam, 1984.
2. John Cornwell, *A Thief in the Night: The Mysterious Death of Pope John Paul I*, Simon and Schuster, 1989.
3. Quoted in Cornwell, *A Thief in the Night*.
4. Cornwell, *A Thief in the Night*.
5. Cornwell, *A Thief in the Night*.
6. Cornwell, *A Thief in the Night*.

16. WOJTYŁA, THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS POPE

1. Jonathan Kwitny, *Man of the Century*, Henry Holt, 1997.
2. Tad Szulc, *Pope John Paul II: The Biography*, Scribner, 1995
3. Szulc, *Pope John Paul II*.
4. Szulc, *Pope John Paul II*.
5. Szulc, *Pope John Paul II*.
6. Quoted in John Koehler, *Spies in the Vatican: The Soviet Union's Cold War against the Church*, Pegasus Books, 2009.
7. Kwitny, *Man of the Century*.
8. Bernard Lecomte, *Le pape qui a vaincu le communisme*, Tempus, 2019.
9. Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, *His Holiness*, Doubleday, 1996.
10. Testimony gathered by Fabio Marchese Ragona, *Il caso Marcinkus*, Chiarelettere, 2018.
11. Ragona, *Il caso Marcinkus*.
12. Gerald Posner, *God's Bankers*, Simon and Schuster, 2015.
13. See Posner, *God's Bankers*.
14. Fabrizio Calvi and Olivier Schmidt, *Intelligences secrètes*, Hachette, 1988.
15. See Yvonnick Denoël, *Sexus economicus: Le grand tabou des affaires*, Nouveau Monde Editions, 2010.
16. Michael Ledeen and Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Qaddafi, Arafat and Billy Carter", *New Republic*, 1 November 1980.
17. Posner, *God's Bankers*.

17. THE THEOLOGY OF THE GUN

1. Peter Kornbluh and Malcolm Byrne, *The Iran–Contra Scandal: The Declassified History*, New Press, 1993.
2. Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, *His Holiness*, Doubleday, 1996.
3. Penny Lernoux, *People of God: The Struggle for World Catholicism*, Viking, 1989.
4. See Phillip Berryman, *Theology of Liberation: Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond*, Temple University Press, 1987.
5. Frédéric Martel, *In the Closet of the Vatican: Power, Homosexuality, Hypocrisy*, Bloomsbury Continuum, 2019.
6. See Lernoux, *People of God*.
7. In 1998, while Pinochet was in hospital in Great Britain and under an international arrest warrant, the Vatican opposed his extradition.
8. Martel, *In the Closet of the Vatican*.
9. Martel, *In the Closet of the Vatican*.

10. Juan Andrés Guzman, Gustavo Villarrubia and Monica Gonzalez, *Los secretos del imperio Karadima*, Catalonia/UDP, 2011.

18. A TRIP TO POLAND

1. Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, *His Holiness*, Doubleday, 1996.
2. *New York Times*, 23 October 1988.
3. Report on the meeting of the Politburo on 29 October 1980, quoted by Bernstein and Politi, *His Holiness*.
4. Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West*, Allen Lane, 1999.
5. See Benjamin Wesser, *A Secret Life: The Polish Officer, His Covert Mission and the Price He Paid to Save His Country*, Public Affairs, 2004.
6. Copies of the reports were discovered in 1994 in the Stasi archives.

19. THREE SHOTS IN SAINT PETER'S SQUARE

1. Divisione Investigazioni Generali e Operazioni Speciali.
2. Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare.
3. Servizio Informazioni Difesa.
4. Milli Istihbarat Teşkilati.
5. Darzhavna Sigurnost.
6. Komitet za Darzhavna Sigurnost (State Security).
7. Sebastian Labo, *Das Attentat auf den Papst im Lichte Fatimas und im Schatten de Oktober-Revolution 1917*, Pro Fratribus, 1982.
8. Paul Henze, *The Plot to Kill the Pope*, Croom Helm, 1984.
9. Jean-Marie Stoerkel, *Les loups de Saint-Pierre*, Plon, 1996.
10. Duane Clarridge, *A Spy for All Seasons: My Life in the CIA*, Scribner, 2002.
11. In 2020, the Grey Wolves attacked the Armenian community in Lyons, France. The French Ministry of the Interior closed down the movement.
12. See *Milliye*t, 10 February 1981, quoted by Roumiana Ourgatschinska, *La vérité sur l'attentat contre Jean Paul II*, Presses de la Renaissance, 2007.
13. Stoerkel, *Les loups de Saint-Pierre*.
14. Nigel West, *The Third Secret: The CIA, Solidarity and the KGB's Plot to Kill the Pope*, HarperCollins, 2001.
15. Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows*, Simon and Schuster, 1998.
16. Sworn statement by Bekir Çelenk, quoted by Stoerkel, *Les loups de Saint-Pierre*.
17. Quoted by Corrado Augias, *Histoire secrète du Vatican*, L'Express Poche, 2013.
18. Quoted by Pino Nicotri, *Mistero Vaticano*, Kaos Edizione, 2002.
19. 15 February 2012.
20. Author's interview with a Roman source.
21. Raffaella Notariale, *Il boss della banda della Magliana*, Newton Compton, 2012.

20. DEATH OF A BANKER

1. Nick Tosches, *Power on Earth: Michele Sindona's Explosive Story*, Arbor House, 1986.
2. *Panorama*, 15 August 1982.
3. Quoted by Robert Hutchinson, *Their Kingdom Come: Inside the Secret World of Opus Dei*, St. Martin's Griffin, 1997.
4. A letter transcribed in Gianni Simoni and Giuliano Turone, *Il caffè di Sindona: Un finanziere d'avventura tra politica, Vaticano e mafia*, Garzanti, 2011.
5. Larry Gurwin, *The Calvi Affair: Death of a Banker*, Macmillan, 1983.

6. In Philip Willan, *The Vatican at War: From Blackfriars Bridge to Buenos Aires*, Universe, 2013.
7. In reality, Marcinkus was never appointed a cardinal.
8. Rupert Cornwell, *Le banquier du Vatican*, Plon, 1984.
9. In Willan, *The Vatican at War*.
10. *Wall Street Journal*, 11–12 December 1992.
11. See Maria Antonietta Calabrò, *Le mani della Mafia*, Edizione Associate, 1991.
12. Quoted by Willan, *The Vatican at War*.
13. Gurwin, *The Calvi Affair*.

21. POLISH CRUSADE

1. See Pierre Marion, *La mission impossible: À la tête des services secrets*, Calmann-Lévy, 1991.
2. Interview with a former agent of the DGSE.
3. Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, *His Holiness*, Doubleday, 1996.
4. Jonathan Kwitny, *Man of the Century: The Life and Times of Pope John Paul II*, Little, Brown, 1997.
5. Testimony collected by Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts, *Pontiff*, Doubleday, 1983.
6. Walter's cable to State Department, CIA and White House, 30 November 1981.
7. *Time*, 24 February 1992.
8. Gerald Posner, *God's Bankers*, Simon and Schuster, 2015.
9. See Giedroyc's obituary in *The Times*, 18 September 2000.
10. Christopher Andrew and Vassili Mitrokhine, *Le KGB contre l'Ouest, 1917–1991*, Fayard, 2000.
11. Andrew and Mitrokhine, *Le KGB contre l'Ouest*.
12. Stasi Archives, doc. 8718/81, Department X, 26 June 1981, BSTU Nr 000018, quoted by John Koehler, *Spies in the Vatican: The Soviet Union's Cold War against the Church*, Pegasus Books, 2009.
13. Stasi Archives, Nr 001326, January 1982, BSTU Nr 000001.
14. This section is based mainly on two interviews by the author with a former CIA agent based in Paris and on Seth G. Jones, *A Covert Action: The CIA and the Cold War Struggle in Poland*, Norton, 2018.
15. Quoted by Bernstein and Politi, *His Holiness*.
16. See Jones, *A Covert Action*.
17. See G. Wołk, "To Limit, to Eradicate or to Control? The SB and the 'Second Circulation', 1981–89/90", in Gwido Zlatkes, Paweł Sowiński and Ann M. Frenkel, *Duplicator Underground: The Independent Publishing Industry in Communist Poland, 1976–89*, Slavica Publishers, 2016.

22. NEW CHALLENGES

1. See Jean Toulat, *Le pape contre la guerre du Golfe*, OEIL, 1991.
2. See Gérald Arboit, *Le Saint-Siège et le nouvel ordre au Moyen Orient: De la Guerre du Golfe à la reconnaissance diplomatique d'Israël*, L'Harmattan, 1996.
3. See Paul Moses, "Vatican Diplomacy and the Iraq War", *Commonweal Magazine*, 13 January 2020, https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/vatican-diplomacy-iraq-war.
4. David Yallop, *The Power and the Glory*, Carroll and Graf, 2007.
5. Yallop, *The Power and the Glory*.
6. He arrived in February 1992
7. Carmela Fonbuena, "Plot to Kill a Pope: Miracle Saved John Paul II in Manila", 13 January 2015, Rappler.com.

23. MARCINKUS GOES … THE CORRUPTION STAYS

1. Gianluigi Nuzzi, *Vaticano, S.p.A.*, Chiarelettere, 2008.
2. John Paul had already condemned the Mafia previously, especially in 1982, but in more measured terms.
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